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**‘OPTING OUT’? NATION, REGION AND  
LOCALITY**

**The BBC in Yorkshire 1945-1990**



**CHRISTINE JANE VERGUSON**

A thesis submitted to the University of Huddersfield in partial fulfilment of the requirements for  
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

**The University of Huddersfield**

January 2014

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## **Abstract**

This thesis considers the extent to which the BBC, arguably the nation's most important cultural institution, attempted to meet its commitment to regional and local broadcasting in one English region, Yorkshire, between 1945 and 1990. The study focuses specifically on the extent to which a distinctive regional culture can be identified within the BBC in Yorkshire and how this changed over time while also considering how BBC programme makers both engaged with and represented the audience and the extent to which they attempted to foster place-related identity.

The years 1945 to 1990 included the relaunching of English regional broadcasting at the end of World War Two, the arrival of television in the North and a redefinition of the BBC's non-metropolitan broadcasting at the end of the 1960s with the creation of a new BBC television region based at Leeds and the launch of BBC local radio. Prior to, and then alongside, the establishment of these new services, Leeds-based producers working for the BBC North Region were bringing new voices in drama and entertainment to the attention of the nation. But by 1990 this period of relative regional autonomy and expansion had come to an end and producers of regional programmes had been told they were to focus on news and current affairs. An oral history approach has been employed alongside an analysis of programme material that concentrates on day-to-day local and regional broadcasting - programmes made in the region for the regional audience - going beyond the 'texts' to ask why these programmes were made and how they were made. Different aspects of programming are considered (regional television news and features, the early years of local radio) together with BBC cultures and practices.

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## Dedications and acknowledgements

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who have helped and supported me in the course of writing and researching this dissertation, particularly those people who were kind enough to share their time and their memories with me and without whom the completion of this work would not be possible. Their voices echo throughout these pages and their names are listed in the Bibliography.

Thanks also to Professor Jean Seaton, to my supervisor Dr Martin Cooper for his advice and encouragement throughout this journey, and to Professor Barry Doyle and to all staff and fellow research students in the Journalism & Media and History departments at the University of Huddersfield who helped to make my return to higher education both satisfying and stimulating. Tosh Warwick and Duncan (now Dr) Stone deserve special mention for their friendship and much-needed advice.

Special praise should go to Sue Howard and the always-friendly staff at the Yorkshire Film Archive, especially to Megan McCooley who has dealt uncomplainingly with all my requests, and to Jeff Walden and Jacquie Kavanagh at the BBC's Written Archive Centre at Caversham. Also at the BBC, thanks should go to Helen Thomas, Sylvia Reeves and Martin Johnson for allowing me access to BBC Yorkshire programme material and also to Lucy Smickersgill who, without me even asking, provided me with copies of anniversary and landmark programmes. Thanks also to staff at the West Yorkshire Archives Service (Bradford, Calderdale and Leeds) and the local studies libraries in Bradford, Huddersfield, Leeds and Sheffield. I'm grateful to Philippa Donnellan who kindly granted me permission to read her father Philip Donnellan's unpublished memoir, *We Were the BBC*. Sue Pagdin and Nigel Fell not only contributed their own memories to this study but pointed me towards other interviewees, Brenda May helped me to track down people who had worked for the BBC in Leeds in 1968 and Patrick Hargreaves and Bob Geoghegan permitted me to make use of their own films relating to aspects of life at the

BBC in Leeds. Thanks also to Martin Coldrick not only for co-editing the collection of reminiscences that first led me to think about the feasibility of this project but also for his meticulous proof reading of the resulting dissertation.

I would also like to thank my family, especially my daughter Leah for her constant encouragement, my son-in-law Michael for his IT advice and my husband David - chauffeur, cook and bottle-washer - who has supported me throughout this research.

Finally I would like to dedicate this work to the memory of my father Raymond Beattie Dodd, a teller of tales, and also to that of my grandparents Annie and Joe who, both having left school at an early age, not only realised that self-education was a lifelong activity but were also part of the first generation to experience the BBC.



## **Glossary**

### **Abbreviations – Archive collections**

HAC	Halifax Authors' Circle
WAC	BBC Written Archives Centre, Reading
WYASB	West Yorkshire Archive Service, Bradford
WYASC	West Yorkshire Archive Service, Calderdale (Halifax)
WYASL	West Yorkshire Archive Service, Leeds
YFA	Yorkshire Film Archive, University of York St John

### **Abbreviations in common use within the BBC**

ABS	Association of Broadcasting Staff
AI	Audience Reaction Index
D-G	Director General
PasB	'Programme-as-Broadcast' – this may refer to forms, which include copyright and contributor details, or to a copy of the programme recorded from transmission
PBX	Telephone switchboard
PSB	Public Service Broadcasting
RTM	Regional Television Manager
RTS	Royal Television Society

### **Technical abbreviations and terms**

16mm film – the standard gauge (width) used in TV production in the period covered by this study.

625 lines - 625 lines used to scan one complete picture frame after another, used first by the BBC for BBC2 in 1964.

a/g s's – air to ground aerial shots

analogue – signals or information stored as a continuously variable quantity.

Betacam SP – introduced by Sony in 1986, the Betacam SP (Superior Performance) cassette rapidly established itself as the professional video format

built programmes – in radio, programmes on specific subjects, planned in advance and of fixed length, eg documentaries. Listeners may 'tune in' deliberately.

commag – combined magnetic film, the sound track being recorded onto a magnetic track on one edge of the film stock, generally used for news.

ENG – Electronic News Gathering but often used interchangeably with PSC

LMCR – Lightweight Mobile Colour Recorder Outside Broadcast Unit

mcs – medium close shot

OB – Outside Broadcast

PSC – Portable Single Camera

Reversal film – Usually used for news, it produced a positive image when processed.

Sepmag – used to describe film where the sound has been recorded onto magnetic tape separately from the picture stock, and then transferred onto tape to run in synchronisation with the picture.

Sequence programmes – in radio, magazine style programmes offering a variety of items and formats, sometimes linked by music, often presenter-led and can be several hours long.

Sync tapes – see Sepmag

Telecine - A telecine (TK) machine scans film so it can be video-recorded or transmitted on television.

two-shot – shows two people within the same frame of film

Uher - The 'Uher' portable reel-to-reel tape recorder, used widely for collecting sound in the field for both radio and TV, 1960s -1990s.

u-matic – Sony first introduced the u-matic cassette in 1969 but it was not used by the BBC in Leeds until 1984.

var s's – various shots

VHF - Very High Frequency, referring to part of the spectrum, delivering a signal, less susceptible to interference and therefore suitable for operating within a smaller geographical range.

VT – tape used to record sound and pictures. In broadcasting the term was often used in connection with larger (one-inch and two-inch tape) and older formats, as distinct from the cassettes used for ENG

## INTRODUCTION

Let me before I die give one last shout for the importance of regional broadcasting. It is, I assure you, worth shouting about. Its effect on English life is only just beginning to be felt and is already enormous.<sup>1</sup>

Viewers tuning into the BBC's *Look North* programme, transmitted from the Corporation's Leeds studios on the eve of the marriage of Prince Charles to Lady Diana Spencer in July 1981 would have discovered that, from bunting to people setting off hoping to witness the occasion, more than half of the programme was taken up by items relating to the royal wedding. In broadcasting studios across the UK the national narrative was being given a regional makeover. Some of those viewers in a BBC region that extended from Whitby to the Wash may even have noticed that, with the exception of a short item on a street party in Sheffield, all of the coverage was filmed in or around Leeds where the BBC's regional studio was based.<sup>2</sup>

In 2004, after more than seventy years, the BBC left the studios it had occupied at Woodhouse Lane in Leeds to move to new premises in the city. The process of collating and co-editing a collection of memoirs from past and present staff at the time of the move<sup>3</sup> led me to consider what might also be lost along with the building which had for so long been identified with the BBC's presence in Leeds and in Yorkshire. While the contributions received were predominantly concerned with the retelling of anecdotes to former colleagues, they also pointed to some of the significant changes in working practices experienced by BBC staff during the Corporation's years at its Woodhouse Lane studios and suggested that such reflections might provide the basis for a future oral history project. My own departure from the BBC in 2009 not only provided me with the opportunity to further consider these questions but also coincided with the publication of the White Paper, *Digital Britain*, which identified regional and local

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<sup>1</sup>Grace Wyndham Goldie, *The Listener*, March 6 1939

<sup>2</sup>*Look North: 3442*, 28 July 1981, BBC Leeds database, YFA

<sup>3</sup>Christine Verguson and Martin Coldrick (eds), *Rumbling and Grumbling: A Farewell to the BBC at Woodhouse Lane, Leeds* (Leeds: BBC Yorkshire, 2004)

broadcasting as a key policy issue, highlighting the importance ‘for civic society and democracy for people to have a range of sources of accurate and trustworthy news at all levels, local, regional and in the Nations as well as UK-wide and international news that is guaranteed, beyond market provision’.<sup>4</sup> Because of the extent of savings then being considered by ITV, it seemed possible that the BBC could become the only public service broadcaster providing regional news,<sup>5</sup> but while emphasizing its importance, at no point did the White Paper provide a definition of what it meant by regional and local news. Together these factors provided the starting point for this research.

While my intention was to focus on one English region, Yorkshire, to investigate the extent to which the BBC – long identified as the nation’s most important cultural institution - had been successful in providing local and regional broadcasting from the early days of radio to today’s multi-platform world, I came to the conclusion that it would be more useful to limit the research to the years between 1945 and 1990, seen by many of those who contributed their memories to this study as a particularly creative time, if not indeed a golden age, in broadcasting history. This period saw the relaunching of English regional broadcasting in a restructured form at the end of World War Two, the arrival of TV in the North and a redefinition of the BBC’s non-metropolitan broadcasting at the end of the 1960s. As had been the case with the establishment of the BBC’s local radio relay stations in the 1920s and their replacement in 1931 by a Regional Programme for the North based in Manchester, these were also points in time when practice had to be reinvented. Despite some setbacks, this was a period of expansion for the BBC in Yorkshire with the establishment of a new TV region based in Leeds in 1968 and the launching of BBC local radio stations. But these were also important years for the BBC North Region’s drama unit, based in Leeds prior to and then alongside the new regional television station, whose

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<sup>4</sup> Department for Business, Information and Skills and Department of Culture, Media and Sport, *Digital Britain: Final Report* (Command Paper 7650), 2009, 141.

<sup>5</sup> ‘Troubled ITV cuts jobs and costs’, BBC News, 4 March 2009, accessed 15 September 2013, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/7922770.stm>.

producers in discovering and nurturing regional talent provided the BBC with a cultural role in the region that went beyond broadcasting.<sup>6</sup> This was also a time when BBC regional heads managed their own budget allocations, providing them with considerable editorial freedom, but this ended with the appointment of John Birt as Deputy Director-General in 1987. Birt was determined to end what he identified as ‘baronies’ within the Corporation<sup>7</sup> but for many of those interviewed for this study, his arrival marked the end of an age that was ‘golden’ in the sense that it had provided them with creative opportunities.

In considering the extent to which the BBC attempted to meet its commitment to regional and local broadcasting in Yorkshire between 1945 and 1990, this dissertation will focus on the culture and experiences of BBC staff. An oral history approach has been employed alongside an analysis of programme material that concentrates on day-to-day local and regional broadcasting – programmes made in the region for the regional audience – going beyond the ‘texts’ to ask why these programmes were made and how they were made. Such personal testimony will help to explain the course of BBC local and regional broadcasting in the period under discussion but this needs to be considered alongside the content of what was produced, and what this tells us about the aims of programme makers and their perceptions of the audience. BBC local and regional programmes made in and for the Yorkshire region have not previously been the focus of academic discussion.

The availability of the archive has also helped to determine the period for consideration. Much of the regional television material accessed for this study, either at the Yorkshire Film Archive or through a personal arrangement with BBC Yorkshire, belongs to the period before 1990. In addition the BBC does not usually allow researchers access to documents that are less than thirty years old and, in the course of recording interviews, it soon became clear that the

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<sup>6</sup> Chapter Two below provides the chronological context for this study.

<sup>7</sup> John Birt, *The Harder Path: The Autobiography* (London: Time Warner, 2002), 251

contributors tended to be more reflective when their days of working for the BBC were behind them. However, this is not a source that can be tapped indefinitely.

In Yorkshire - as in the other BBC regions – the geographical boundary, determined by transmitter reach, and in some instances wavelength allocation, has never matched the editorial definition of the region. This was reflected in the difficulty of finding a name for a region which even in theory included not only Yorkshire but Lincolnshire and parts of Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire and in reality reached Norfolk while some viewers in Harrogate – only fifteen or so miles from Leeds – could only receive the BBC’s service from Newcastle. Prior to the launch of regional television from Leeds in 1968, the BBC described its new region as being ‘east of the Pennines’ or alternatively as ‘the Leeds region’ but the name ‘North’ was adopted, presumably to indicate that this version of its regional news was not coming from Manchester or from Newcastle whose TV regions were renamed as BBC North West and North East respectively.<sup>8</sup> As will be shown, both name and transmitter reach and availability also prevented the BBC’s local radio stations from clearly defining and identifying with the areas they served.<sup>9</sup>

The first question to be considered in the course of this research was that of regional identity, and the part the BBC may have played in helping to create or reinforce a sense of ‘Yorkshireness’. Following Benedict Anderson’s exploration of the emerging ‘national imaginations’ at work in nineteenth century ‘print capitalism’, and despite the specificity of his argument, the notion of ‘imagined communities’, has become commonplace in discussions of both national and regional identity. While Anderson’s argument also points to experiences of simultaneity among people who are generally unknown to each other, in other words an audience,<sup>10</sup> academic commentators have warned against making assumptions about the impact

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<sup>8</sup> See also Chapter Two below. Yorkshire was not adopted as part of the regional name until 2004.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid

<sup>10</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*. 2nd ed. (London: Verso, 2006)

of ‘texts’ on audiences<sup>11</sup> but programmes may still throw some light on the way in which identities have been both constructed and contested. With this in mind, and as suggested by the fieldwork, it became apparent that the key research question was rather the extent to which the BBC in Yorkshire produced programmes in the region and for the region that were distinctive to those made by the BBC in London.

Moreover, if we are looking for signs of regional ‘imaginings’ at work in the audience, then surely we should also be looking at the broadcasters. This study will investigate the extent to which we can identify a distinctive regional culture or cultures within the BBC in Yorkshire and, in so doing, will bring together process and product by focusing on programmes and the people who made them. Unusually, it will also consider the BBC’s regional and local broadcasting together - and radio alongside television - reflecting the BBC’s own view that these were both aspects of its non-metropolitan broadcasting. And, although the starting point for this project was the creation of an oral history, in attempting to explore the extent and effectiveness of the BBC’s local and regional broadcasting in the Yorkshire region, it has been necessary to use a wide variety of historical sources.<sup>12</sup> Mindful of James Curran’s call for a ‘new synthesis’ between the ‘bafflingly different’ approaches to media history, this thesis does not attempt to fit the source material to one particular theory.<sup>13</sup> Instead it makes use of the different historiographical approaches where they add to the understanding of the development of the BBC in Yorkshire but at the same time it aims to contribute further evidence to these different perspectives.

This dissertation is divided into three sections with the first providing the overall context for what follows. It begins with a discussion of the relevant historiography, drawing from both

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<sup>11</sup> These ideas will be expanded in the following chapter.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid

<sup>13</sup> James Curran, *Media and Power* (London: Routledge, 2002). As identified by Curran, the rival narratives were the liberal, the feminist, the populist, the libertarian, the anthropological, the radical and the technological determinist. See also Michael Bailey, ‘Editor’s introduction’ and James Curran, ‘Narratives of media history revisited’ in Michael Bailey (ed.), *Narrating Media History* (London: Routledge, 2009).



media and regional history, outlining the methods and sources employed and identifying the key questions. Chapter Two provides a chronological account of the BBC in Yorkshire between 1945 and 1990 and discusses how this related to what was happening in the wider organization. In particular the experiences of the BBC North Region's Radio Drama Department, based in Leeds from 1945 until the mid-1970s, will be used to show how the relationship between the idea of the BBC as a regional and as a national broadcaster was subject to continual negotiation. This theme is explored further in Section Two through three case studies: regional news coverage as illustrated by the television news magazine, *Look North*; the television 'feature' programmes made in Leeds between 1971 and 1990; how one Yorkshire city – Bradford – experienced the BBC through its national, regional and local broadcasting. This approach provided the opportunity not only to place the importance of regional and local news as defined by the *Digital Britain*<sup>14</sup> white paper within its historical perspective, but also to explore how both region and place were defined and represented by BBC programme makers. The concluding section of the dissertation discusses the changes in cultures and practices of BBC Leeds staff employed in a range of occupations in both television and radio, and then goes on to consider the ways in which they attempted to engage with audiences. It is hoped that this historical study into one BBC region will go some way towards understanding the changing definitions of 'regional' and 'local' broadcasting and the extent to which regional and local news could have been left to an organization whose name defines it as a national institution.

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<sup>14</sup> See above, 11.

## **PART ONE: CONTEXTS**

### **Chapter One: Historiography, sources and method**

#### **Introduction: ‘Yorkshire’ in histories of the BBC**

When, in 2009, James Curran accused British media historians of too often focusing on the history of institutions, he was almost certainly thinking of Asa Briggs’ monumental history of British broadcasting. But while Briggs was concerned with the development of the BBC as an institution, drawing heavily from the Corporation’s written archives, he also pointed to some of the contradictions that the BBC would continue to face throughout its history, claiming: ‘During the four years from 1922 to 1926 almost all the later developments of radio were anticipated if not fulfilled.’<sup>1</sup> In 1923 opposition in Sheffield - the first place in Yorkshire to have a BBC wireless relay station - to the idea of taking programmes from Manchester resulted in Sheffield being linked directly to London while also producing some of its own programmes.<sup>2</sup> Other local transmitters followed including the Leeds/Bradford relay station, 2LS, in 1924 which Briggs referred to without further explanation as a ‘precarious combination’.<sup>3</sup>

Briggs was to expand on these themes in 1975 following the establishment of both BBC and commercial local radio stations. Taking Leeds as his case study, using newspapers as well as the BBC archives, he went back to what he saw as an earlier ‘localism’ to explore the tensions between national, regional and local broadcasting within the BBC.<sup>4</sup> But Briggs also provided a glimpse of the workplace culture that prevailed at the BBC in Leeds in the station’s early years:

The atmosphere of 2LS...was remarkably informal, and several graphic accounts survive of the padded studio and the warning notices designed to keep all visitors silent...The birthday party at

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<sup>1</sup> Asa Briggs, *The history of broadcasting in the United Kingdom: Vol.1: The Birth of Broadcasting* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961), 7.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 217.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 218.

<sup>4</sup> Asa Briggs, ‘Local and regional in Northern sound broadcasting’, *Northern History*, 10 (1975), 165-187.

the end of the first year was obviously hilarious. The professional staff had to turn themselves daily, like their colleagues in the other local relay stations, into ‘uncles’ and ‘aunties’ for ‘Kiddies’ Corner, the children’s audience, the needs of which were kept very much to the forefront.<sup>5</sup>

Paddy Scannell and David Cardiff, celebrating the inventiveness at the Leeds/Bradford station described by Briggs, concluded: ‘There is reason to think that radio was more genuinely local for a few years in the early twenties than it was some sixty years later in the 1980s.’<sup>6</sup> This localism was almost immediately replaced by what became known as the Regional Scheme brought about by the construction of high-powered twin-wave transmitters (two transmitters housed in the same building and capable of providing two different programmes) but smaller in number and greater in reach. The new twin-wave transmitters were capable of providing a national service as well as a choice of programmes. Following the opening of a new transmitter at Moorside Edge near Huddersfield in 1931, the BBC’s relay stations in Sheffield, Leeds and Hull were closed and Yorkshire became part of the new North Region with its headquarters in Manchester.<sup>7</sup> And while Scannell and Cardiff may have given a big ‘shout’ for the inventiveness of the relay stations, Mark Pegg argues: ‘The "giant" transmitter was capable of a much superior quality and choice of broadcasting compared with the old fashioned local stations and their loss was mourned barely at all.’<sup>8</sup>

Although the loss of the local stations may have been inevitable if the BBC was ever to become a national broadcaster - Briggs says they ‘came to an end primarily for reasons of technology’<sup>9</sup> - the Corporation now had to start to consider to what extent it would cater for national, regional and local audiences. According to Briggs this was a gradual process:

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 173-174.

<sup>6</sup> Paddy Scannell and David Cardiff, *A Social History of British Broadcasting: Volume One 1922-1939: Serving the Nation*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 304.

<sup>7</sup> Mark Pegg, *Broadcasting and Society: 1918-1939*, (Beckenham: Croom Helm, 1983), 26.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>9</sup> Briggs, ‘Local and regional in Northern sound broadcasting’, 169.

This [the North] ‘region’ was not created by one single great act of policy, Reithian or otherwise. It took shape gradually, and as it took shape the BBC was forced at almost every critical point in the story to consider the relationship between the ‘local’ and the ‘regional’ not simply in terms of ‘devolution’, the terms of which it is often thought of in current debates about government and administration, but in terms of cultural debate and activity.<sup>10</sup>

This ‘cultural debate and activity’, including the part played by the groundbreaking programmes produced by the Manchester-led BBC North Region in the 1930s, is frequently cited in the academic discourse around national and regional identity and will be returned to later in this chapter.

However, little mention has been made of the programmes that were produced by the BBC in Leeds after 1931 in state-of-the-art premises. As Briggs points out:

It would be wrong to underestimate the value and quality of much of the ‘Northern’ material produced during the nineteen-thirties, including that produced in Leeds, and it would be wrong also to minimize the substantial as well as the symbolic importance of the move in 1933 (opening day was 3 May) to larger, completely re-designed premises in Woodhouse Lane. The studios, control room and other offices... offered facilities particularly for brass bands and for certain kinds of drama superior to those in Manchester.<sup>11</sup>

Despite this reminder, while there have been references to Leeds-based radio drama producer Alfred Bradley and his discovery and fostering of northern writers who would eventually take their place on the national stage, the context in which Bradley worked and the achievements of the North Region Sound Drama unit, based in Leeds since 1945, have not been explored. Nor has the gradual expansion of the BBC’s news presence, including the creation of a new BBC television region east of the Pennines in 1968, in response to competition from ITV, been the focus of any previous academic research.

In tracing the history of BBC Local Radio in England between 1960 and 1980 Matthew Linfoot builds on the work of both Briggs and Scannell, identifying the main issues that faced the BBC in its struggle both to establish and extend local radio. Linfoot’s detailed reading of the

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 178.

BBC's Written Archive has helped to provide the developmental context for the present study, including the establishing of BBC Radio Sheffield in 1967 and Radio Leeds in 1968. His interviews with 'key participants' contribute to our understanding of the difficulties and opportunities faced by station managers but this approach also means that when Linfoot comes to describing life inside the BBC local radio station, he provides what is very much an organizational perspective.<sup>12</sup>

## **Technological imperatives**

In Yorkshire – as in other BBC regions – the geographical boundary, largely determined by the location of transmitters, has changed frequently but has never matched the BBC's editorial definition of the region. Just as its Northern Region came into being with the construction of Moorside Edge, so the reach of the new BBC TV region in 1968 was determined by the Holme Moss transmitter yet James Curran warns against giving changes in technology too deterministic a role in media history.<sup>13</sup> Thomas P. Hughes, in rejecting technological determinism, advocates looking at technological systems as a whole: 'Technological systems contain messy, complex, problem-solving components. They are both socially constructed and society shaping'.<sup>14</sup> Hughes' systems include both human and non-human components, and even the legislation relating to those systems, but he is also concerned with explaining their evolution and the role of 'systems builders' who create not only the physical artefacts but also organizations: 'One of the primary characteristics of a systems builder is the ability to construct or to force unity from diversity, centralization in the face of pluralism, and coherence from chaos. This construction

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<sup>12</sup> Matthew Linfoot, *A History of BBC Local Radio in England*. PhD thesis, University of Westminster, 2011.

<sup>13</sup> James Curran, 'Media and the Making of British Society, c.1700-2000', *Media History*, 8 (2002) 2, 135.

<sup>14</sup> Thomas P. Hughes, 'The Evolution of Large Technological Systems' in Wiebe E. Bijker, Thomas P. Hughes, Trevor J. Pinch (eds.), *The Social Construction of Technological Systems: New Directions in the Sociology and History of Technology*, (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1989), 51.

often involves the destruction of alternative systems.<sup>15</sup> Hughes' model would seem to apply to an extent to the early days of the BBC Regional Scheme, which was based around a network of transmitters, but Hughes also explores the idea of differences in technological style that may account for the same technology showing variations from 'time to time, from region to region, and even from nation to nation'.<sup>16</sup> Thus, Hughes argues, before World War One the supply of electrical power in Britain had rested with local authorities but the experience of wartime planning led Parliament to create the first national grid: 'The political forces that were brought to bear more than matched the internal dynamic of the system.'<sup>17</sup>

The influence of 'political forces' can be clearly seen in the Netherlands where, as in Britain and other European countries, the Geneva Plan of 1925 had rationed wavelength availability. Here wavelengths were allocated according to the country's main religious and political groups, in which, according to Kees Brants, 'one could be looked after from the cradle to the grave'.<sup>18</sup> But if one country showed that political will was a more important determinant than technology, then it was Germany which by 1939 had the highest number of radio sets in Europe. Following the Nazi takeover of power in 1933, Goebbels, aware of how radio could be used for propaganda, ordered manufacturers to come up with a design for a people's radio and the first Volksempfänger appeared in the same year. During the Third Reich German radio remained firmly under the control of the Propaganda Ministry but, as Peter Humphreys shows, despite the different Länder developing their own regional stations, the German state already had a controlling interest in broadcasting before 1933. He concludes: 'Thus, during Germany's ill-fated and short-lived first experiment with liberal democracy, broadcasting was treated as an important function of public administration rather than as an independent self-regulating social

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 52.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 68-69

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 80.

<sup>18</sup> Kees Brants, 'Broadcasting and Politics in the Netherlands: From Pillar to Post', *Western European Politics*, 8 (1985) 2, 106. The broadcasting corporations allowed on the air were socialist (VARA), Roman Catholic (KRO,) two Protestant corporations (NCRV, VPRO) and a commercial company (AVRO) linked to the 'liberal sphere'.

activity.<sup>19</sup> News and information were supplied by a central office while broadcasters were left to determine the content of entertainment programmes.<sup>20</sup> The denazification of broadcasting by the Allies provided West Germany with a regional broadcasting structure which initially reflected the broadcasting philosophy of the occupying powers, centralized in the British and French zones, while the Americans' more federal approach resulted in a number of different stations. These differences, Humphreys argues, left the new Federal Republic with discrepancies in its broadcasting structure: 'Once established, the regional authorities were naturally jealous to protect and preserve their individual broadcasting corporations.'<sup>21</sup> But, as Arthur Williams noted, the extent to which programmes were shared and co-operation took place between different regional stations pointed more to plurality in provision than to programmes deeply rooted in regional identity.<sup>22</sup> Similarly Bill Kirkpatrick suggests that the rapid proliferation of stations across the United States during the early days of radio did not mean that these stations set out to build on local identity and that the Federal Radio Commission regulated against local distinctiveness and diversity.<sup>23</sup>

Raymond Williams dismissed the technological determinism approach to understanding the media that he identified in the work of Marshall McLuhan as ideological, accusing McLuhan of failing to see the media as practice:

If specific media are essentially psychic adjustments, coming not from relations between ourselves but between a generalized human organism and its general physical environment, then of course intention, in any general or particular case is irrelevant, and with intention goes content, whether apparent or real.

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<sup>19</sup> Peter J. Humphreys, *Media and Media Policy in Germany: The Press and Broadcasting since 1945*. 2nd. ed. (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 1994), 125.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 131.

<sup>22</sup> Arthur Williams, *Broadcasting and Democracy in West Germany*, (Bradford: Bradford University Press, 1976), 37.

<sup>23</sup> Bill Kirkpatrick, *Localism in American Media, 1920-1934*, (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 2006).

And if the ‘medium is the message’ then there is no point in looking at either who controls media institutions or their intentions, implicit or explicit.<sup>24</sup> Williams also warned against substituting technology as an *effect* for technology as a *cause*, seeing it rather as part of a social process by which various factors ‘set limits and exert pressures, but neither wholly control nor wholly predict the outcome of complex activity within or at these limits, or under or against these pressures’.<sup>25</sup> Thus people will come up with new ways of using the technology resulting in different practices – the emergence of the BBC as a producer after 1925 alongside its role as a provider of the means of transmission was a result of regulation.<sup>26</sup> Similarly broadcasting was appropriated by audiences in certain ways because it fitted in with a shift of cultural life into the private household, a concept which Williams termed ‘mobile privatisation’.<sup>27</sup> But new technologies also provide new opportunities and new dangers and Williams believed that in the future, although it would still be necessary to have national providers of programmes, television could make a significant contribution at a local level towards both the fostering of community identity and democracy. However, he saw that television technology had the potential to be used in ways with conflicting implications for democracy:

We could have inexpensive, locally based yet internationally extended television systems, making possible communication and information-sharing on a scale that not long ago would have seemed utopian. These are the contemporary tools of the long revolution towards an educated and participatory democracy, and of the recovery of effective communication in complex urban and industrial societies. But they are also the tools of what would be, in context, a counter-revolution, in which, under the cover of talk about choice and competition, a few para-national corporations, with their attendant states and agencies, could reach further into our lives, at every level from news to psycho-drama, until individual and collective response to many different kinds of experience and problem become almost limited to choice between their programmed possibilities.<sup>28</sup>

Most broadcasting workers were unlikely to ever come into direct contact with the ‘large systems’ - the transmitters, satellites, and cable networks - which connected them to their

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<sup>24</sup> Raymond Williams, *Television: Technology and cultural form*, 2nd. ed., (London: Routledge, 1974), 130-131.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 133.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 157.



audiences; rather it was technology, in the form of the 'kit' needed to do their jobs which played an important part in their working lives. Some recent studies have led Henrik Örnebring to ask why technological determinism is so prevalent amongst journalists who 'in general seem to view technology and technological development as inevitable, impersonal forces that directly cause many of the changes taking place within journalism...In the minds of journalists, many if not most of the changes taking place in contemporary journalism are essentially technologically driven'.<sup>29</sup> Örnebring bases his analysis on the concept of journalism as labour to explore the relationship between journalism and technology. He focuses on the emergence of a division of labour - the 'gradual disconnection of the technology of printing from the actual newsgathering labour' which increased specialization, and the use of technology to increase productivity as well as deskilling,<sup>30</sup> pointing out that for most of the twentieth century, and certainly in the case of TV and radio, 'parts' of the labour have been carried out by other crafts or professions. Örnebring concludes that, while technology does not exist outside of society, modern journalism emerged from the industrial revolution and continues to be shaped by wider technological developments: 'New technologies are adapted according to existing patterns, and these patterns are in turn shaped by a long historical process that has served to naturalize the dominance of technology over journalism.'

Using Actor Network Theory (ANT) Emma Hemmingway has explored the role technology plays in news production, focusing on the BBC regional newsroom in Nottingham. She argues that previous media analysis has failed to explore media practices: 'Instead the umbilical chord binding process and product is severed and a separate interpretation of the product grafted on.'<sup>31</sup> Advocates of ANT are concerned with the study of technology, organization and social processes but believe Thomas Hughes' approach is limited because it still creates a dichotomy

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<sup>29</sup> Henrik Örnebring, 'Technology and journalism-as-labour: Historical perspectives', *Journalism*, 11 (2010) 1, 62.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

<sup>31</sup> Emma Hemmingway, *Into the Newsroom: Using Actor Network Theory to investigate the construction of news facts*, PhD thesis, Nottingham Trent University, 2006, 21.

between subject and object and between human and non-human elements. Developed initially by French sociologists Bruno Latour and Michael Callon, ANT had its starting point in observations carried out in scientific laboratories but has since been extensively used in real-life research, its followers insisting it is not a theory but a method. Latour has said it is not so much about actors' behaviour and motives but is used 'only to find the procedures which render actors able to negotiate their ways through another's world-building activities',<sup>32</sup> but in John Law's words: 'This, then, is one of the core assumptions of actor-network theory: that Napoleons are no different to small-time hustlers, and IBMs to wheel-stalls. And if they are larger, then we should be studying how this comes about – how, in other words, size, power or organization are generated.'<sup>33</sup> But, while arguing that ANT has allowed her to explore the role that technologies play in news production<sup>34</sup>, Hemmingway draws attention to the specificity of her study and concludes that ANT as a methodology is limited when it comes to explaining the motives and intentions of human actors.<sup>35</sup> Hemmingway's interviewees did provide interesting observations on how programmes are put together but it is probable that such insights could have been made without the application of ANT.

## **Audiences and programmes**

For Raymond Williams the technology of television was inextricably linked to its cultural form – the extent to which people experience television as a 'continuous flow' and talk about watching TV or listening to the radio rather than to specific programmes.<sup>36</sup> Taking this further, Paddy Scannell points out that people frequently talk about watching 'nothing':

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<sup>32</sup> Bruno Latour, 'On recalling ANT' in John Law and John Hassard, (eds.) *Actor Network Theory and After*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), 2.

<sup>33</sup> John Law, 'Notes on the Theory of Actor Network: Ordering, Strategy and Heterogeneity', accessed 5 November 2013, <http://www.lancaster.ac.uk/sociology/research/publications/papers/law-notes-on-ant.pdf>

<sup>34</sup> Hemmingway, *Into the Newsroom*, 200.

<sup>35</sup> Hemmingway, *Into the Newsroom*, 174.

<sup>36</sup> Williams, *Television: Technology and Cultural Form*, 95.

All day, every day and everywhere people listen to radio and watch television as part of the utterly familiar, normal things that anyone does on any normal day. 'Anything on telly?' 'No, nothing.' It is not, of course, that there is, in some literal way, nothing to watch. Rather, that what there is is nothing out of the ordinary; merely the usual programmes on the usual channels at the usual times. Nor does this necessarily imply a disincentive to viewing. We do watch a lot of 'nothing' on television, in fact we watch it nearly all the time.<sup>37</sup>

For Scannell, following Heidegger, 'dailiness' and the part this plays in everyday life is the essential characteristic of radio, television and even the press.<sup>38</sup> Scannell is concerned with how broadcasters interact with their audiences and the extent to which programmes are organized according to these behaviours.<sup>39</sup> If, as he suggests, the 'temporal regularity' of programmes ranging from *Doctor Who*<sup>40</sup> to news bulletins contribute to 'dailiness', then the daily regional television news magazine may also provide the same function for regional audiences. Scannell argues that the act of being broadcast provides events and experiences with eventfulness and authenticity: 'The double articulation of the event - its power of being in two places at once – is mediated through the revolutionary "art or craft" of actuality reporting. This, too, has a double articulation: it is both a showing and a telling.'<sup>41</sup> But for Scannell sociability is 'the most fundamental characteristic of broadcasting's communicative ethos',<sup>42</sup> tracing its origins to the *Harry Hopeful* series broadcast in the BBC's North Region in 1935 through to the post-war quiz *Have a Go!*, produced in Leeds and presented by Wilfred Pickles, which soon became radio's most listened-to weekly programme, a position it retained for more than ten years. Sociability is about self-presentation; it is concerned with the way presenters like Pickles interact not only with programme guests but with the audiences in the studio and at home, some of whom may come to see the presenter as a personal friend. It is also about the way presenters talk to each other, and

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<sup>37</sup> Paddy Scannell, *Radio, Television & Modern Life*. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 6.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 155.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 155.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 83.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

therefore to the audience, during a broadcast. Given that even news programmes may frequently be promoted not so much on the basis of content but on the make-up of the presentation team (not to mention the weather man or woman), any exploration of regional and local broadcasting will need to consider self-presentation.

In his exploration of the part radio and television play in everyday modern life, Scannell stresses that he is talking about the organization of programmes and the intentions of programme makers, not about any 'transfer' of meaning to anyone watching or listening.<sup>43</sup> Not only programme structure but the way meanings were encoded in the 'text' and decoded by different viewing groups from different social, cultural and occupational backgrounds formed the basis of empirical research carried out by David Morley and Charlotte Brunson which provided material for two studies: *Everyday Television: Nationwide* (1978), focusing on how 'text' and presentational style reinforced a reading based on the programme makers' assumptions about how the world should be represented, and *The Nationwide Audience* (1980) which was concerned with comparing the responses of the viewing groups taking part in the study.<sup>44</sup> Morley and Brunson's research - although subject to much subsequent criticism, not least from Morley himself<sup>45</sup> - is of particular interest to the present study because during its lifetime *Nationwide* (1969 -1983) enveloped the BBC's regional news magazine programmes. In 1978 Morley and Brunson summed up what they believed to be the essence of *Nationwide*'s self-presentation style:

It presents itself as catching in its varied and comprehensive gaze 'everything' which could possibly be of interest to us, and simply 'mirrors' or reflects it back to us. What is more, it 'sees'

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>44</sup> Both reports were later published together and this is the version used here: David Morley and Charlotte Brunson, *The Nationwide Television Studies*, (London: Routledge, 1999).

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 13

these events in exactly the same perspective, and speaks of them in exactly the same 'voice', as that of its audience. Everything in *Nationwide* works so as to support this mirror-structure of reflections and recognitions. The ideology of television as a transparent medium – simply showing us 'what is happening' – is raised here to a high pitch of self-reflexibility. The whole of the complex work of the production of *Nationwide*'s version of 'reality', sustained by the practices of recording, selecting, editing, framing and linking, and the identificatory strategies of producing 'the scene Nationwide', is repressed in the programme's presentation of itself as an unproblematic reflection of 'us' and 'our world' in 'our' programme. *Nationwide* thus naturalises its own practice, while at the same time it is constantly engaged in constituting the audience in its own image.<sup>46</sup>

While the assumption made here is that a preferred hegemonic reading of the programme will transfer itself to an undifferentiated audience, the analysis of such practices and the conventions used in their presentation is still not only a valid but necessary approach to any interpretation of programmes. Indeed as Shaun Moores suggests, despite the limitations of its methodology, Morley's 1981 study at least confirms that audiences, and individuals, will decode programmes in different ways.<sup>47</sup> Adding a 'postscript' to the *Nationwide* project in 1992, Morley suggests that programmes can be usefully studied according to the distribution of forms of cultural competence and states that his own concern is what he terms an 'ethnography of reading'.<sup>48</sup>

Summarizing empirical work relating to the understanding of audiences, Andrew Crisell suggests that research has provided more in the way of questions than answers, especially regarding how audiences can be identified in the first place.<sup>49</sup> Morley chose to use viewing groups rather than people who would be likely to watch *Nationwide* and paid no attention to the ways the programme might be experienced outside of these groups,<sup>50</sup> although he was subsequently to focus on the ways television was viewed within the individual household.<sup>51</sup> But how far is it possible to apply an ethnographic approach to the study of past audiences?

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 30-31.

<sup>47</sup> Shaun Moores, *Interpreting Audiences: The Ethnography of Mass Consumption*, (London: Sage Publications, 1993), 22.

<sup>48</sup> David Morley, *Television, Audiences and Cultural Studies*, (London: Routledge, 1992), 130.

<sup>49</sup> Andrew Crisell, *An Introductory History of British Broadcasting*, 2nd. ed., (Abingdon: Routledge., 2002), 187.

<sup>50</sup> Moores, *Interpreting Audiences*, 7.

<sup>51</sup> Morley, *Television, Audiences and Cultural Studies*, 131.

Contemporary surveys pointed to different ways the radio was used by people within the same household.<sup>52</sup> Moores has used an oral history approach to investigate the domestication of radio: ‘...its transformation from being an "unruly guest" to becoming, symbolically at least, a "good companion" to household members’ as experienced in a town in the North of England.<sup>53</sup> Further afield, Jukka Kortti and Tuuli Mähönen have used oral history in the form of reminiscences to explore both changes in Finnish television over time and how television has shaped everyday life,<sup>54</sup> claiming that such an approach has enabled them to collect information that otherwise would not be available ‘allowing the reader to peep into the Finnish living room across the decades of television’.<sup>55</sup>

Such studies help us to understand the extent to which individuals, long before the advent of the web, have shaped their own media cultures. Sonia Livingstone and Rajana Das provide a useful summary of the main ideas emerging from audience reception studies, suggesting that these can be divided into three ‘key insights’, each an argument against what went before: ‘meaning’ (‘Audience readings could not be predicted from a knowledge of the text alone...’); ‘context’ (‘Audience readings are always plural, diverse, this demanding that interpretation be situated in relation to specific social contexts’) and agency (‘Everyday micro-tactics of appropriation reshape and remediate media texts and technologies...’).<sup>56</sup> Calling for a history of

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<sup>52</sup> Hilda Jennings and Winifred Gill, *Broadcasting in Everyday Life: A Survey of the Social Effects of the Coming of Broadcasting*, (London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1939); B. Seebohm Rowntree and G. R. Lavers, *English Life and Leisure: A Social Study*, (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1951).

<sup>53</sup> Shaun Moores, *Media and Everyday Life in Modern Society*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), 42.

<sup>54</sup> Jukka Kortti and Tuuli A. Mähönen, ‘Reminiscing Television: Media Ethnography, Oral History and Finnish Third Generation Media History’, *European Journal of Communication*, 24 (2009) 1, 50.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 64.

<sup>56</sup> Sonia Livingstone and Ranjana Das, ‘The end of audiences? Theoretical echoes of reception amidst the uncertainties of use’, conference paper originally presented at Transforming audiences 2, 3-4 September 2009, University of Westminster, accessed 5 December 2013,

[http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/25116/1/The\\_end\\_of\\_audiences\\_\(LSERO\).pdf](http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/25116/1/The_end_of_audiences_(LSERO).pdf),

audiences, Jonathan Rose believes critics who focus on the text rather than on the audience are guilty of what he calls the ‘receptive fallacy’ by failing to ask how we know that any listeners ‘consciously or subliminally’ have absorbed the message inherent in a given text.<sup>57</sup> Rose used memoirs, surveys and library registers to construct his ‘intellectual’ history of the British working class but appreciations of regional and local programmes are less likely to have been recorded by viewers and listeners. With Rose’s ‘receptive fallacy’ in mind, this present study aims to avoid making assumptions about audience reception in discussing the projection of local, regional and national identity in BBC programmes.

### **The region as an ‘imagined’ community**

In 1939 Jennings and Gill, in reporting on a survey on the effects of broadcasting commissioned by the BBC and carried out in a working-class district of Bristol, observed that radio programmes had the potential for creating a national community:

Listeners begin to be conscious of themselves and their lives in relation to a larger community. The fact that millions are listening to the same programme gives them the sensation of being part of a nation in a way that was experienced rarely and for short periods only in the past. They accept as a matter of course their share in the launching of a new battleship or the opening of a national exhibition.<sup>58</sup>

As has already been stated, forty years later, identifying emerging ‘national imaginations’, Benedict Anderson also pointed to experiences of simultaneity amongst ‘imagined communities’ of consumers. This only became possible because of the coming together of developments in transport and communication:

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<sup>57</sup> Jonathan Rose, *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 4-5.

<sup>58</sup> Jennings and Gill, *Broadcasting in Everyday Life*, 12.

Between 1500 and 1800 an accumulation of technological innovations in the fields of shipbuilding, navigation, horology and cartography, mediated through print-capitalism was making this type of imagining possible. It became conceivable to dwell on the Peruvian altiplano, on the pampas of Argentina, or by the harbours of 'New' England, and yet feel connected to certain regions or communities, thousands of miles away, in England or the Iberian peninsula. One could be fully aware of sharing a language and a religious faith (to varying degrees), customs and traditions, without any great expectation of ever meeting one's partners.<sup>59</sup>

If Anderson's argument is correct, then it would also seem reasonable to assume that the BBC – a national monopoly for the first thirty years of its existence – has also played its part in fostering 'this type of imagining'.

The notion of 'imagined communities' is now so commonplace in discussions of both national and regional identities - Raphael Samuel suggests it may fill the same 'symbolic space' once occupied by the Reformation<sup>60</sup> - that it is easy to forget that it has had its critics. Raymond Chartier warns against 'the strong temptations of identitarian history',<sup>61</sup> quoting Eric Hobsbawm to support his argument: 'Reading the desires of the present into the past, or, in technical terms, anachronism, is the most common and convenient technique of what Benedict Anderson has called "imagined communities" or collectives, which are by no means only national ones.'<sup>62</sup> Tim Edensor dismisses complaints that Anderson's theory tends to ignore the role of the state and other 'socio-political realities of power', suggesting that 'nations emerge out of contexts of social and cultural experience which are imaginatively conceived', but believes that Anderson's argument relies too much on the print media 'in a historical perspective which reifies the sources (literature)' while ignoring other cultural activities and forms including television and radio.<sup>63</sup> However, Anderson is specifically focusing on the origins and 'spread' of nationalism and his

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<sup>59</sup> Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 188.

<sup>60</sup> Raphael Samuel, *Island Stories: Unravelling Britain: Theatres of Memory: Volume Two*, (London: Verso, 1998),

<sup>61</sup> Raymond Chartier, *On the Edge of the Cliff: History, Language and Practices*, (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1997), 8.

<sup>62</sup> Eric Hobsbawm, 'The Historian between the Quest for the Universal and the Quest for Identity'. *Diogenes*, 42 (1994) 168, 59.

<sup>63</sup> Tim Edensor, *The National Identity, Popular Culture and Everyday Life*. (Oxford: Berg, 2002), 7.



description of the way newspapers are consumed might be even more appropriate to radio and television:

The significance of the mass ceremony – Hegel observed that newspapers serve modern man as a substitute for morning prayers – is paradoxical. It is performed in silent privacy in the lair of the skull. Yet each communicant is well aware that the ceremony he performs is being replicated simultaneously by thousands (or millions) of others of whose existence he is confident, yet of whose identity he has not the slightest notion. Furthermore, this ceremony is incessantly repeated at daily or half-daily intervals throughout the calendar. What more vivid figure for the secular, historically clocked imagined community can be envisioned?<sup>64</sup>

Anderson attributes this need for ‘mass ceremony’ to the ‘built-in obsolescence’ of newspapers, the idea that they need to be consumed at once, but newspapers – unlike radio and television in their early years at least - could be, and were, frequently passed on to other readers and consumed at a later date. It should be said, though, that Edensor is sympathetic to Anderson’s portrayal of nations as imagined communities and the ‘mundane level’ at which this operates contained in Anderson’s description of the ‘mass ceremony’.

According to Shaun Moores the imagined community made available by early BBC radio was predominantly that of the nation, created partly by the broadcasting of both national and big sporting events although he accuses Cardiff and Scannell of assuming that listeners always identified positively with such occasions: ‘We therefore need to see collective identities as the product of public/private articulations which are not always forged successfully. Qualitative audience research can aid us in examining those interdiscursive processes.’<sup>65</sup> Using the personal testimonies contained in the Mass Observation Archive in an ongoing study to identify patterns in the way the Coronation of Elizabeth II was perceived by the television audience, Örnebring identified ‘unique, particular and sometimes dissenting views’ which say as much about ‘our very concrete communities and social groups, those together with which we view television – family, friends and acquaintances’ as about Anderson’s ‘national, abstract “imagined

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<sup>64</sup> Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 35.

<sup>65</sup> Moores, *Interpreting Audiences*, 87-88.

community”’.<sup>66</sup> With such caveats in mind it is possible to agree with Dave Russell that Anderson’s theory is of ‘extraordinary value as a shorthand encapsulation of a complex process’, yet is it also the case, as Russell believes, that the national culture has largely been defined in London and that as a result the region – in Russell’s case the North of England – has been seen as the ‘other’ and consequently ‘inferior’?<sup>67</sup> This question is of great importance to any study into the nature of regional broadcasting. Russell concludes: ‘The North has...enjoyed some degree of agency and been celebrated, even cherished, but always on terms dictated by the centre and its positional superiority and in ways that do not fundamentally challenge perceived truths about the nature of English identity.’<sup>68</sup> Russell’s discussion of the place of England in the ‘national imagination’ focuses on *Have a Go* and concludes: ‘It did as much to sustain a kind of sub-political populism as any other northern cultural product in the twentieth century,’<sup>69</sup> while Paul Ward cites the BBC’s use in wartime of Wilfred Pickles, both as a news announcer and as the presenter of *We Speak For Ourselves* (a wartime series touring workplaces), to suggest that very often local and regional identities act as ‘building blocks’ for a national identity: ‘Ultimately they [regional identities] complement the nation, allowing Britishness to emerge from an apparent diversity of regional identities in which often the same (national) values are validated.’<sup>70</sup> Or as Jean Seaton, talking specifically about the BBC puts it:

Then there is the ‘representing the nation to itself’. This is, in part, an issue of representing the bits of nations to themselves, partly an issue of representing the bits of the nation to the whole and partly a matter of correcting the overall picture by the nuancing that regional perspectives and realities bring. It has done each task variably well over time, sometimes falling into clichés, but at other times creatively harvesting local differences and local contributions to enrich the national brew.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Örnebring, ‘Writing the history of television audiences: The Coronation in the Mass-Observation Archive’, in Helen Wheatley, (ed.) *Re-viewing television history: Critical issues in television historiography*. (London: I.B. Taurus, 2009), 183.

<sup>67</sup> Dave Russell, *Looking North: Northern England and the national imagination*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), 8.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 140.

<sup>70</sup> Paul Ward, *Britishness since 1870*. (London: Routledge, 2004), 68-69.

<sup>71</sup> James Curran and Jean Seaton, *Power Without Responsibility: Press, Broadcasting and the Internet in Britain*, 7th. ed., (London: Routledge, 2010), 303.

Thomas Hajkowski argues that periodization has led many previous commentators to underestimate the independence of the BBC's nations and regions, as well as the platform the BBC provided for listeners across the nation to hear regional programmes, voices and dialects.<sup>72</sup> Suggesting that too much attention has been given to 'the ways in which the BBC standardized certain aspects of British culture' he concludes: 'Rather, the BBC reinforced a particular kind of Britishness, and in doing so, it helped to transform it, pushing the boundaries of what it meant to be British. The BBC made British national identity more flexible and accommodating of the diversity of the peoples of the British Isles.'<sup>73</sup>

Before considering the part the BBC may have played in helping to create or even reinforce a sense of 'Yorkshireness' it is necessary to consider the extent to which distinct regional identities existed in England. William Marshall has demonstrated how print media was used to both construct and project 'Yorkshireness' between 1850 and 1918 and argues that this acted as 'a countervailing force to the tendency towards nationalisation of culture'.<sup>74</sup> According to Edward Royle, the region is 'for the historian a term of convenience, located specifically in time as well as space, with no promise of more than temporary existence',<sup>75</sup> and, as Seaton observes 'the whole landscape of Britain has disappeared since the 1970s'.<sup>76</sup> Paul Ward argues that the region, like the nation, is an imagined community but one whose identity tends to be less fixed and is, more often than not, defined in contrast to the centre.<sup>77</sup> Russell suggests that the BBC probably failed to foster a northern identity partly because of 'differentiation' within the North.<sup>78</sup> But from 1955 ITV provided a new basis for regional broadcasting, causing John Corner to

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<sup>72</sup> Thomas Hajkowski, *The BBC and National Identity in Britain, 1922-1953*, (Manchester: Manchester University, 2010), 109-130.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 237.

<sup>74</sup> William Marshall, *The Creation of Yorkshireness: Cultural Identities in Yorkshire c1850-1918*, PhD thesis, University of Huddersfield, 2011, 7.

<sup>75</sup> Edward Royle, 'Introduction: region and identity' in Edward Royle (ed.) *Issues of Regional Identity: In Honour of John Marshall* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), 1.

<sup>76</sup> Curran and Seaton, *Power Without Responsibility*, 2010, 296.

<sup>77</sup> Ward, *Britishness since 1870*, 67.

<sup>78</sup> Dave Russell, *Looking North*, 164.

comment: 'That this is sometimes shaded into "populism"...is undoubtedly true, but the opening out of regional and social class representations (voices, images, concerns, entertainments) which followed the breaking of the BBC monopoly is, nevertheless, one of the most significant phases in British post-war cultural history.'<sup>79</sup> This meant that the BBC had to rethink its own regional offering - certainly, as this study will show, the establishment of a new BBC TV region with its headquarters in Leeds had everything to do with the splitting up of Granada's region and the granting of a franchise to Yorkshire Television.

Citing the 1973 Kilbrandon report as providing evidence of 'regional loyalty',<sup>80</sup> Christopher Harvie describes English regionalism in the political sphere as 'the dog that never barked'.<sup>81</sup> Like Anderson, Harvie stresses the importance of 'print-capitalism' but in relation to authenticity rather than identity: 'Other British regions were given the Lake District treatment and turned into politically-innocuous cultural divisions of the national community. Largely through print-capitalism, regional "authenticity" emerged, as in "Yorkshire" and the Bronte industry.'<sup>82</sup> Christopher Bryant believes that the English are much more likely than the Irish, Scots or Welsh to see themselves in regional terms because, unlike the other nations of the British Isles, they are 'without an equivalent Other', claiming that this particularly applies in the North East, Cornwall, London and Yorkshire.<sup>83</sup> In asking who the English are, Bryant believes that regional representation is complicated by the 'uneven distribution' of ethnic minorities across the English regions,<sup>84</sup> making the imagined community something to be aimed for: 'The very idea of an imagined *community* reflects a desire for community in modern life where it is otherwise often

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<sup>79</sup> John Corner, 'Television and Culture: Duties and Pleasures' in David Morley and Kevin Robins, *British Cultural Studies: Geography, Nationality and Identity*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

<sup>80</sup> The Kilbrandon Report recommended devolution for Scotland and Wales.

<sup>81</sup> Christopher Harvie, 'English Regionalism: The Dog that Never Barked' in Bernard Crick (ed.) *National Identities: The Constitution of the United Kingdom*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 106.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 110.

<sup>83</sup> Christopher Bryant, 'These Englands, or where does devolution leave the English?' *Nations and Nationalism*, 9 (2003), 394.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 409.

absent. But the longed-for is idealised, reality always falls short of it and both reasons and passions are needed to cope with the difference.<sup>85</sup> And having presented us with what he sees as the limitations of regionalism in England, Harvie speaks out for a local identity he regards as ‘essential to a bourgeois civil society – let alone a social democracy’.<sup>86</sup> While Natasha Vall warns against the ‘dangers of "history as advocacy" she sees as inherent in regional studies,<sup>87</sup> Harvie’s personal statement reflects a long and widely held belief about the importance of local journalism for democracy, even if ‘reality always falls short of it’.

But before turning to local identities consideration needs to be given to regional representation on television. The ITV company usually considered to have been most successful in projecting, and indeed creating, regional identity was Granada, with the North West of England even defined as ‘Granadaland’ and in this its long-running serial *Coronation Street* may have played a part.<sup>88</sup> Focusing on the cultural history of North East England, Natasha Vall argues that broadcasting ‘had an important part to play in both shaping and representing regional culture’<sup>89</sup> while also pointing to the challenges faced by both the BBC and the commercial company Tyne Tees in reflecting regional identity. She shows how after 1945 BBC radio provided a region with ‘the experience of “hearing itself”’ which she argues was particularly the case in the North East with programmes such as *Wot Cheor Geordie*,<sup>90</sup> produced by Richard Kelly in the BBC’s Newcastle studio. Kelly complained that his time in Newcastle was (in

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 396.

<sup>86</sup> Harvie, ‘English regionalism’, 116.

<sup>87</sup> Natasha Vall, ‘Bohemians and "pitmen painters" in North East England, 1930-1970’, *Visual Culture in Britain* 5 (2004) 1, 2

<sup>88</sup> Rob Shields, *Places on the Margin: Alternative geographies of modernity*, (London: Routledge, 1991), 224. See also John Walton, ‘Imagining regions in comparative perspective: the strange birth of North-West England’ in Bill Lancaster, Diana Newton, Natasha Vall (eds.), *An Agenda for Regional History*, (Newcastle Upon Tyne: Northumbria University Press, 2007).

<sup>89</sup> Natasha Vall, *Cultural region: North east England 1945-2000* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011), 2.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 11, 29. The programme ran from 1945 to 1956 with Kelly producing it from 1948.

Vall's words) 'a campaign against the double imperialism of Manchester and London'.<sup>91</sup> But Vall also points out that Kelly's attitude to the place of regional culture in broadcasting was also ambiguous, attributing this to the Newcastle station's place within the BBC North Region and its lack of facilities, compared not just to Manchester but also to Leeds.<sup>92</sup> The arrival of Tyne Tees Television in 1959 might have provided new opportunities for reflecting regional life but, Vall concludes, the company was unwilling 'to look beyond the commercial dimension' while both Granada and the BBC were willing to encourage 'more complex representations'.<sup>93</sup> But while the award-winning BBC drama series *When the Boat Comes In* was praised for its authenticity, the fascination of writers with class and industrial inheritance meant that 'in the depiction of north-eastern culture a preoccupation with class allowed the mining theme to dominate television drama, also helping to ensure that regional homogeneity was portrayed at the *expense* of diversity'.<sup>94</sup> However, broadcasters were also faced with the dilemma of how to reconcile the presentation of regional identity with cultural change:

The problem of representing vernacular culture on television was also symptomatic of the growing chasm between developments in wider, youth-orientated popular culture and local traditions, which had lent themselves well to radio development. An enduring theme in the history of broadcasting media, as reinforced by the 1977 Annan Report, is the ever present tension between the wish to present the local vernacular against the desire for many people and viewers in the region to participate in the wider national radio and television culture.<sup>95</sup>

But, having identified the themes that characterised the depiction of the North East in both the regional media and on network channels and believing it 'remains crucial to understand why such themes have dominated cultural representation', Vall has also called for comparative investigations in other regions.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Natasha Vall, 'Regionalism and Cultural History: The Case of North-Eastern England, 1918-1976', in Green, A. and Pollard, A.J. (eds.) *Regional Identities of North-East England, 1300-2000*, (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2007), 186-187.

<sup>92</sup> Vall, *Cultural Region*, 33-34.

<sup>93</sup> Vall, 'Regionalism and Cultural History', 194; Vall, *Cultural Region*, 55.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 201-202

<sup>95</sup> Vall, *Cultural Region*, 59-60.

<sup>96</sup> Vall, 'Regionalism and Cultural History', 205.

Even without the pull of football which according to Harvie, with its strong urban fanbase, weakened the ‘political dimension’ of regionalism in England from the 1870s,<sup>97</sup> regional identities may be weakened by the rivalry and different interests of cities and towns within the region. In their comparative study of Manchester and Sheffield carried out in the mid-1990s, Ian Taylor, Karen Evans and Penny Fraser observed: ‘It has been a matter of angry local comment over the years that the regional television news emanates from Leeds, Sheffield’s great rival Yorkshire city, 40 miles north up the M1 motorway.’<sup>98</sup> And, as Rawnsley points out, cities such as Leeds, Sheffield and Bradford are economic regions in their own right, ‘each with its own distinctive identities and cultures’,<sup>99</sup> while also noting that ‘BBC radio was initially a vehicle for the expression of civic pride’.<sup>100</sup> The extent to which the BBC in Yorkshire has, over the years, acted as a vehicle for such positive ‘local imaginings’ or may also have contributed to the marginalizing of locality at certain times will form part of the present research.

Sport reporting has a significant role to play in regional and local broadcasting, providing broadcasters with a means to ally themselves with audiences. Sport has also allowed different identities to be called on in different circumstances, most usually expressed in the form of rivalry with other places within a region.<sup>101</sup> However, in the case of cricket, Rob Light has argued that the growth of rivalries within Yorkshire led to ‘the subsequent development of Yorkshire county cricket as a key focal point of regional identity’.<sup>102</sup> The ‘acutely developed competitiveness’ shown within Yorkshire cricket, and its contribution to widespread pride in the county side, was also observed by Dave Russell – he sums it up using words attributed to cricketer Wilfred

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<sup>97</sup> Harvie, ‘English regionalism’, 111.

<sup>98</sup> Ian Taylor, Karen Evans and Penny Fraser, *Tale of Two Cities: Global Change, Local Feeling and Everyday Life in the North of England*, (London: Routledge, 1996), 10.

<sup>99</sup> Stuart Rawnsley, ‘Constructing the North: Space and a Sense of Place’ in Neville Kirk (ed.) *Northern Identities: Historical Interpretations of the North and Northerness*, (Aldershot: Aldgate Publishing, 2000), 6.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>101</sup> Mike Huggins, ‘Sport and the Social Construction of Identity in North-East England, 1800-1914’ in Kirk (ed.) *Northern Identities: Historical Interpretations of the North and Northerness*, 158.

<sup>102</sup> Rob Light, ‘“In a Yorkshire Like Way”: Cricket and the Construction of Regional Identity in Nineteenth-century Yorkshire’. *Sport in History*, 29 (2009) 3, 505.

Rhodes: ‘We doan’t play cricket in Yorkshire for foon’.<sup>103</sup> Such sentiments have surely echoed down the years, finding a place in the ways the region has been represented.

## Competition and policy

In any discussion of the BBC’s role in creating ‘national identity’ it is important to remember, as Sean Street and others have argued, that from the 1930s the BBC faced competition from commercial stations whose idea of ‘community...went little further than a potential sales market’.<sup>104</sup> Surveys from the mid-1930s show that listening to commercial radio was widespread with almost one million households listening to Radio Luxembourg (whose pirating of a long wave frequency enabled the station to broadcast across the UK), 750,000 to Radio Normandie and 900,000 to Radio Paris.<sup>105</sup> Relay exchanges (where homes were linked by cable to a central receiver) not only did away with the initial expense of buying an expensive radio but also provided better reception which enabled Radio Normandie to target audiences in southern England by providing broadcasts for specific areas without alienating listeners in other localities: ‘In this way, with the aid of new technology, the IBC [owners of Radio Normandie] sought to undermine (albeit in a relatively minor way) the BBC’s prized Regional Service.’<sup>106</sup>

Although the BBC was to regain its monopoly with the advent of war, it also had to take dissatisfaction with its programmes more seriously.<sup>107</sup> The BBC’s role during World War Two in fostering the ‘national imagination’ has been extensively debated within the academy but one consequence of the war was the launching of the Forces Programme - aimed not only at troops

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<sup>103</sup> Russell, *Looking North*, 241. Wilfred Rhodes played cricket for Yorkshire from 1898 to 1930.

<sup>104</sup> Sean Street, *Crossing the Ether: British Public Service Radio and Commercial Competition*, (Eastleigh: John Libby Publishing, 2006), 69.

<sup>105</sup> Peter M. Lewis and Jerry Booth, *The Invisible medium: public, commercial and community radio*, (London: Macmillan, 1989), 73.

<sup>106</sup> Street, *Crossing the Ether*, 155.

<sup>107</sup> Siân Nicholas, ‘The People’s Radio?’ The BBC and its audience 1939-45’, in Nick Hayes and Jeff Hill, (eds.) *Millions Like Us? British Culture in the Second World War* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1999), 69-70.



but also those on the Home Front – and which, unlike the pre-war Regional Programme, offered different types of programmes to those found on the Home Service. At the end of the war the General Forces Programme became the Light Programme but there was to be no resumption of the Regional Programme; instead each BBC Region would make programmes for its region which would be transmitted by opting-out of the Home Service, but each station would also make programmes for all the BBC's services.

Radio Luxembourg's needletime agreements with record companies eager for promotion gave the station the opportunity to attract young people, which as the BBC's own research seemed to indicate were a new audience as the Light Programme's audience had not declined.<sup>108</sup> But in the end it was not Radio Luxembourg but the offshore pirate stations of the 1960s, helped not only by a diet of chart music but also by the growth in the ownership of transistor radios, that were able to take advantage of this new audience. Government legislation against offshore broadcasting in 1967 was accompanied by a White Paper that not only required the BBC to set up a service offering 'continuous popular music' but also gave the go-ahead for nine experimental local radio stations. Lewis and Booth argue that the BBC 'brought [local radio] out of the cupboard as a diversion from the success of the pirates'<sup>109</sup> while Crisell maintains the pirates made local radio fashionable: 'The pirates were relevant because they were, in a loose sense, local. Few broadcast over an area bigger than the Home Counties, many of them promoted local events and some appealed to local loyalties by taking names like Radio Essex and Radio Kent.'<sup>110</sup> Matthew Linfoot dismisses the suggestion that the decision to give the go-ahead for BBC Local Radio owed much to the success of the pirate stations,<sup>111</sup> and for Stephen Barnard, its establishment, discussed in the 1960 Pilkington Report, was more a matter of

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<sup>108</sup> Crisell, *An Introductory History of British Broadcasting*, 141-143

<sup>109</sup> Lewis and Booth, *The Invisible Medium*, 86.

<sup>110</sup> Crisell, *An Introductory History of British Broadcasting*, 143.

<sup>111</sup> Linfoot, *A History of BBC Local Radio in England*, 48-49

timing,<sup>112</sup> but one that was also politically expedient.<sup>113</sup> Yorkshire's own pirate station, Radio 270, moored off the coast at Bridlington, initially made little contribution to local or regional identity, as Rob Chapman observes:

In its programming style Radio 270 was the classic case of the small localized station trying to sound like a national networked one. This confusion over regional identity brought with it inevitable problems...A Yorkshireman exhorting his audience to buy tinned potatoes in a pseudo-American accent was clearly no more absurd than someone from Essex adopting the same strategy, but it was arguably not the best way to build up a sense of intimacy or local identity.<sup>114</sup>

Radio 270's shareholders, including managing director Wilf Proudfoot, were all Yorkshire businessmen and, Chapman suggests, the only localization of the station's output was achieved through advertising aiming at a Yorkshire audience.<sup>115</sup> But also associated with Radio 270 was Patrick Wall, Conservative MP for the east Yorkshire constituency of Haltemprice, who in 1967 used the station to put forward the case for reopening negotiations with Rhodesia.<sup>116</sup>

In his very useful account of the history of media history, Tom O'Malley claims that media studies came to be dominated by cultural studies, 'characterized by a relative marginalization of policy issues', which led Raymond Williams and others to ask that history be put back into media studies:

Policy work was not such a strong feature amongst those specialists who defined themselves increasingly as being involved in cultural studies. Towards the end of his life Raymond Williams 'criticised the current academic practices of cultural studies as having strayed too far from their radical and grounded origins'. During the 1980s the dominant shift in UK media culture was associated with the radical restructuring of broadcasting initiated by Conservative administrations led by Margaret Thatcher...But there was unease amongst some that, in spite of the volume of courses and academics, policy issues played a relatively minor role in academic practice.<sup>117</sup>

Raymond Williams did not live to see how the de-regulation introduced in the 1990

Broadcasting Act was eventually to lead to the merging of companies and ITV's attempt to

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<sup>112</sup> Stephen Barnard, *On the Radio: Music Radio in Britain*. (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1989), 46.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 65.

<sup>114</sup> Robert Chapman, *Selling the Sixties: The Pirates and Pop Music Radio*, (London: Routledge, 1992), 156.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 155.

<sup>116</sup> Richard Rudin, 'Revisiting the Pirates', *Media History*, 13:2 (2007) 242

<sup>117</sup> Tom O'Malley, 'Media History and Media Studies: aspects of the development of the study of media history in the UK 1945-2000', *Media History*, 8 (2002) 2, 161-162.

reduce its public service broadcasting (PSB) commitments including those relating to regional broadcasting.<sup>118</sup> It is possible, too, that if regional and local broadcasting were not part of the BBC's public service remit, enshrined in the BBC Charter, then they may well have developed differently. Ultimately – although public opinion may have to be taken into account - the BBC exists only by the will of Parliament. Nor is the BBC immune from commercial pressures. According to anthropologist Georgina Born who looked at the BBC during the Birt years, the Corporation and its staff had long been aware of the ‘paradox’ forced on them by competition:

Since 1955, BBC television has had to compete with ITV and then with others. Yet while it is not engaged in commercial competition, the result of the BBC's drive for legitimacy is the same: it has to be popular and it has to *demonstrate* its popularity...competitive ratings are necessary but not sufficient to justify the licence fee. The BBC must provide a range and diversity of programming. It must offer mass-appeal programmes, but it must also serve minority audiences and those un-attractive to advertisers, who are under-served by commercial television.<sup>119</sup>

The allocation and management of resources is central to any discussion of the role of regional and local broadcasting within the BBC. As early as 1935, W.A.Robson, writing in *The Political Quarterly*, proposed that five autonomous regions should be created:

Each [region] would be transformed into a miniature BBC with its own board of governors appointed by the Government as the responsible body. Each regional corporation would organise its own programmes, subject to interchange arrangements with the National programmes...A percentage of the licence fee would be allocated to each regional body, based possibly on the number of listeners in the area.<sup>120</sup>

In 1993, in advance of the BBC Charter renewal, Sylvia Harvey and Kevin Robins asked the then BBC Controller of Regional Broadcasting, Mark Byford, what would happen if the Regions could decide how their budgets were spent and whether their relationship with London could be less of ‘a core-periphery network’. In reply Byford pointed out that the BBC provided a range of services throughout the UK and that historically the ‘heart’ of the BBC had been in London but

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<sup>118</sup> Ray Fitzwalter, *The Dream That Died: The Rise And Fall Of ITV*, (Leicester: Matador, 2008).

<sup>119</sup> Georgina Born, *Uncertain Vision: Birt, Dyke and the reinvention of the BBC*, (London: Vintage, 2004), 54.

<sup>120</sup> Quoted in Sylvia Harvey and Kevin Robins, ‘Voices and Places: The BBC and Regional Policy’, *The Political Quarterly*, 65, 1, January 1994, 41.

he did admit that the Corporation's own research suggested that the BBC was seen as 'remote'.<sup>121</sup> And in 2008 an independent report by Anthony King, commissioned by the BBC Trust, was highly critical of the BBC's regional news coverage and recommended that its UK News Centre should move out of London.<sup>122</sup> King identified not only a discontinuity between the 'mental worlds' of BBC news producers and potential audiences,<sup>123</sup> but also within the BBC itself:

There has never been a time in the BBC's history when there have not been tensions between the BBC in London on the one hand and regions and nations on the other... In more recent times, a state of something like war has sometimes existed between the BBC in London and some of its operational centres elsewhere in the country. Old soldiers who fought in those wars have tales to tell.<sup>124</sup>

The impact of both BBC and government policy on the history of the BBC in Yorkshire provides the framework for the following chapter.

## **BBC cultures**

Whatever the medium, according to historian and journalist Robert Darnton, 'news is not what happened but a story about what happened, shaped by various conventions, not least those followed by those who produce it'.<sup>125</sup> Reflecting on his observational study of how the BBC's national news was put together, Philip Schlesinger explained: 'I was trying to grasp how the world looks from the point of view of those being studied.'<sup>126</sup> But, he added, it was necessary to 'go beyond immersion' to investigate how BBC News fitted within the larger organization, the

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<sup>121</sup> Sylvia Harvey and Kevin Robins, 'Interview with Mark Byford, BBC Controller of Regional Broadcasting' in Harvey, S. and Robins, K. (eds.) *The Regions, the Nations and the BBC*. (London: British Film Institute, 1993), 106-107.

<sup>122</sup> Anthony King, 'BBC Network News and Current-Affairs Coverage of the four UK Nations: An Independent Assessment for the BBC Trust', 75, accessed 20 January 2014 [http://www.bbc.co.uk/bbctrust/assets/files/pdf/review\\_report\\_research/impartiality/uk\\_nations\\_impartiality.pdf](http://www.bbc.co.uk/bbctrust/assets/files/pdf/review_report_research/impartiality/uk_nations_impartiality.pdf),

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, 68.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, 72.

<sup>125</sup> Robert Darnton, 'The Library in the New Age', *The New York Review of Books*, 55 (2008) 10, accessed 1 December 2013, <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/21514>

<sup>126</sup> Philip Schlesinger, *Putting 'reality' together: BBC News*, (London: Constable, 1978), 11.

extent to which its development was affected by politicians and competition, how the news staff saw their audience and the ‘work processes’ and conventions involved in producing the news.<sup>127</sup>

The first major study of culture within the BBC was undertaken by sociologist Tom Burns who gained access to the ‘private world’ of the Corporation in 1963 and, again, in 1973.<sup>128</sup> Burns identified a change in ethos where professionalism was now valued more highly than public service and where programme makers were increasingly becoming divided from administrators. BBC journalists were beginning to see themselves primarily in terms of their profession and producers had achieved an elite role: ‘Universal deference was paid to the image of the producer as responsible for the “real job” of the Corporation, as the creative person, as the worker at the “coal face”; administration was accorded a subsidiary role – even by administrators.’<sup>129</sup> But Burns was also there in the early 1970s to witness a shift in power away from production departments towards management resulting in division and distrust.<sup>130</sup>

Referring to the internal divisions witnessed by Burns and other academics, David Hendy, a former BBC producer, gives us his account of how internal debate works within the BBC:

Sometimes, too, there are sharp divisions of opinion *within* the Corporation – unsurprisingly, perhaps, given that the Corporation encompasses a vast range of professions, each holding to its own ‘tribal wisdom’. Talk to anyone in the BBC and they speak endlessly of ‘powerful baronies’ and ‘warring factions’, territorial disputes or philosophical rows between journalists and dramatists, television people and radio people, Governors and managers, managers and producers, prescriptivists and descriptivists, traditionalists and experimenters, young and old – any number of whom believe that it is they, and they alone, who understand what the BBC is all about.<sup>131</sup>

Although Georgina Born’s observational study of the BBC took place in the late 1990s, some of her findings may also be relevant to the period covered in the present study. She applauds the way staff identified with their own particular department or genre within the BBC as a whole:

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>128</sup> Tom Burns, *The BBC: Public Institution and Private World*, (London: Macmillan, 1977).

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., 218.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid., 257.

<sup>131</sup> David Hendy, *Life on Air: A History of Radio Four*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 5.

‘The distinct identity of each production area, expressed in a scepticism towards rival departments and other parts of the BBC, is vital to the BBC’s well-being. It fosters internal diversity and the space for dissent and debate – essential preconditions for an independent and innovative production culture.’<sup>132</sup> Before Birt, Born notes, many members of staff saw the BBC as nothing less than a way of life:

Until recent years, for all the organizational divisions, because the BBC’s social purposes and ethical basis are real, unequivocal and long-standing, the corporation has been a way of life for many employees, in whom it inspired unusual devotion and who approached their work almost as a vocation. The robust identification of many staff within the BBC provided the organization with an implicit but resilient unity.<sup>133</sup>

Taking this idea further, Jean Seaton in stressing the importance of human agency as practices evolve points to the significance of the Corporation’s ‘informal structures’:

The BBC takes people in; it brings them up, and nurtures and encourages talent. Quite often it wastes it. The BBC can be - as a large organisation that can see itself as ‘the best’ - brutal. However, the calibre and qualities of the people that work in the ethical boiling rooms is unavoidable. One striking feature of interviewing large numbers of ex-BBC employees is their modest amazement at the Corporation: they recognise something larger than their part of the story. The BBC inculcates values and habits, morals and judgements, yet in the end it depends and is altered by the varying ambitions, capacities and decencies of the people that it employs.<sup>134</sup>

But as Suzanne Franks has shown, for most of the 1970s the BBC did little to encourage and utilize the talent of its female staff: ‘The paltry statistics of women’s everyday progress within the institution were reinforced by women’s everyday experiences.’<sup>135</sup> These themes are taken up throughout this study.

Alastair Hetherington’s main concern was journalistic practice when, in 1989, he examined how news was put together across different organizations and platforms, including TV and local radio. Focusing on four UK regions, including Yorkshire, his research findings based on

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<sup>132</sup> Born, *Uncertain Vision*, 77.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, 81.

<sup>134</sup> Jean Seaton, ‘Journeys to the truth: the BBC as a pragmatic ethical engineer at home and abroad’, *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, 28 (2008) 4, 445-446.

<sup>135</sup> Suzanne Franks, ‘Attitudes to women in the BBC in the 1970s – not so much a glass ceiling as one of reinforced concrete’, *Westminster Papers*, 8, 3 (December 2011), 134. accessed 8 January 2014, [http://www.westminster.ac.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0005/124880/008Attitudes-to-women-in-the-BBC-in-the-1970s-Suzanne-Franks.pdf](http://www.westminster.ac.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0005/124880/008Attitudes-to-women-in-the-BBC-in-the-1970s-Suzanne-Franks.pdf)

observation and interviews over a very short period of time, were essentially descriptive but provide a useful comparison between the BBC and YTV newsrooms in Leeds. However, there is very little analysis of day-to-day decision-making processes.<sup>136</sup> In contrast Emma Hemmingway, whose study of how news was being constructed in the BBC Nottingham newsroom has already been discussed in relation to technology, set out to explore ‘the notion of media work as a significant social practice in itself’.<sup>137</sup> Although ethnographic in approach, she criticises ‘the organizational studies’ of Burns and Schlesinger for providing ‘little discussion of human agency’ in the news process. Writing in 2004, Schlesinger concludes that the ‘best sources for a contemporary institutional analysis are broadly sociological or anthropological in focus’ emphasizing the need to understand the ‘creation of broadcasting cultures, that is the interconnected practices and occupational beliefs that inform the purposes of broadcasting and give those who work inside it their various rationales’.<sup>138</sup> Focusing on the culture and experiences of BBC workers in Yorkshire between 1945 and 1990, the present study will explore the extent to which the need to provide both local and regional programming contributed to those ‘rationales’. The issues outlined above, influenced by the very different approaches to media history, suggest that BBC staff operated within a variety of contexts and that a multi-method approach should be used in the use and interpretation of sources.

## **Methodology and sources**

Rob Perks argues that oral history can, and should, contribute to the historical understanding of corporations: ‘Organizations are made up of people, each with their own personal biography but each organization has its own biography shaped both by its own people’s biographies and the

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<sup>136</sup> Alastair Hetherington, *News in the Regions: Plymouth Sound to Moray Firth*, (London: MacMillan, 1989).

<sup>137</sup> Hemmingway, *Into the Newsroom*, 15.

<sup>138</sup> Philip Schlesinger, ‘Do institutions matter for public service broadcasting?’, 5 (2004), accessed 12 December 2013, <http://stakeholders.ofcom.gov.uk/binaries/consultations/psb2/annexes/wp2schles.pdf>

versions of itself that it creates for different purposes at different times.<sup>139</sup> But in attempting to identify these ‘versions’ of the BBC, and how they were understood, and how and why they changed, a variety of historical sources has been used to interpret and extend the evidence provided by personal testimony. Thus the oral history approach provides a framework for an analysis of programme material that concentrates on day-to-day local and regional broadcasting – programmes made in the region for the regional audience – going beyond the ‘texts’, many of which were never intended to be anything other than ephemeral, to ask why these programmes were made and how they were made.

To an extent the participants in this study were self-selecting and their recollections of their time at the BBC were largely positive. Interviewees were enlisted as a result of a notice in the BBC pensioners’ magazine, *Prospero*, or by word-of-mouth while others were contacted after being suggested during the course of the research. And while the author had worked alongside some of the contributors, there had been no previous contact with other interviewees prior to this project. As all the participants including the interviewer had at some point worked for the BBC, there was usually an assumption that having to some extent shared the same experiences, there was also a shared language, either of the BBC or of broadcasting technology. This study was presented to participants as a collaborative effort and a ‘shared authority’ approach was taken, ‘a re-imagining of the past that is being shared in a joint moment between narrator and interviewer’,<sup>140</sup> in which interviewees were asked to talk about experiences of their life at the BBC that were important to them. Patrick Joyce has suggested that historians often forget that work is ‘a cultural activity, rather than simply an economic one’<sup>141</sup> and asking contributors to tell their life story, at least as far as it related to the BBC, makes it possible for them to reflect on the meanings their work had for them. Inevitably the interviews followed different trajectories,

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<sup>139</sup> Rob Perks, ‘Corporations are People Too: Business and Corporate Oral History in Britain’, *Oral History*, Vol. 38, No. 1 (Spring 2010), 50

<sup>140</sup> Lynn Abrams, *Oral History Theory*, (London: Routledge, 2010), 27

<sup>141</sup> Patrick Joyce (ed.), *The Historical Meanings of Work* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 1987, 1



dictated not only by the turn of the conversation, the relationship between interviewer and interviewee and perhaps also the familiarity of the contributor with the interview process, frequently supplemented by direct questions to further the research. Indeed, those contributors who had worked as journalists or producers often expected this.

While oral history testimony may be influenced by hindsight, other autobiographical sources tend to be fixed at one moment of time. This study has drawn on existing collections of anecdotes and reminiscences as well as published autobiographies and, while one of its purposes is to go beyond the anecdote, such stories may still have something to contribute to the history of regional broadcasting. As Yiannis Gabriel observes:

Storytelling is not dead in most organizations. Organizations do possess a living folklore, though this is not equally dense or equally vibrant in all of them. This folklore, its vitality, breadth, and character, can give us valuable insights into the nature of organizations, the power relations with them, and the experiences of their members.<sup>142</sup>

While the collected reminiscences considered in this study were intended for an audience of former colleagues who may have shared in some of the experiences that were being related,<sup>143</sup> the published autobiography is, in Lynn Abrams' words, 'the position of a life within a broader conception of the past, a linking of the private with the public, the personal with the political'.<sup>144</sup> The memoirs of successive Director-Generals cannot be ignored but not all the autobiographies consulted here were written 'from above' or even from within the Corporation, for example freelancer Bertha Lonsdale spent thirty years working almost exclusively for the BBC North Region yet always felt herself to be an outsider.<sup>145</sup> Written testimony in some cases also took the form of e-mail interviews with the author. The BBC, regionally and nationally, has usually

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<sup>142</sup> Yiannis Gabriel, *Storytelling in Organizations: Facts, Fictions and Fantasies*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 22.

<sup>143</sup> BBC TV North staff, *Talented, Difficult, Cussed, Lovely people: 25 years of Television Broadcasting from the BBC in Leeds*, 1993; Verguson and Coldrick (eds), *Rumbling and Grumbling*, 2004.

<sup>144</sup> Abrams, *Oral History Theory*, 26.

<sup>145</sup> Bertha Lonsdale, *They'd Taken the Tram Away*, unpublished typescript, Bradford City Libraries, n.d.

made the most of opportunities to present ‘versions’ of its past, hoping to engage audiences in the marking of anniversaries and, if accessible, such material is also useful to the researcher.<sup>146</sup>

Personal testimony will help to explain the course of BBC local and regional broadcasting in the period under discussion but this needs to be considered alongside the content of what was produced, and what this tells us about the aims of programme makers and their perceptions of the audience. Reflecting on writing the history of broadcasting, Seaton warns: ‘Making the programmes central to the history is a challenge, not least because there are so many of them.’<sup>147</sup> And, at the same time, gaining access to programme archives presents considerable problems to the researcher. The archive of the BBC regional television news magazine, *Look North*, held by the Yorkshire Film Archive (YFA) plays a central part in this study as does the YFA’s database compiled within the BBC from old indexes to facilitate the Corporation’s future access to this material. However, *Look North* was a live programme and so only film inserts survive.<sup>148</sup> That the film inserts in the archive are far from complete is a direct result of the production process as will be reflected on later in this dissertation. Other regional television material is held by the BBC in its regional office in Leeds or at its central archive at Maida Vale but this is not normally available to doctoral researchers although I was given access to VHS copies of material held by BBC Yorkshire.<sup>149</sup> Local radio programmes were considered to be ephemeral and, even when recorded, few have survived. Programmes have often had to be reconstructed from listings, reviews, scripts and other documentary evidence. Starting in the 1950s, the run of the Northern, and then Leeds, edition of the *Radio Times* held by Bradford Central Library has been particularly useful while programme and contributors’ files at the BBC’s Written Archives

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<sup>146</sup> See Appendix Two for a description of items marking the twenty-fifth anniversary of the regional news magazine *Look North*. Other anniversary programmes consulted are listed in the Bibliography.

<sup>147</sup> Jean Seaton, ‘Writing the History of Broadcasting’ in David Cannadine (ed.), *History and the Media*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004), 155

<sup>148</sup> The BBC deposit at the YFA also includes some inserts and feature programmes on videotape but both the format and the fragility of the tape restrict the use of these tapes for research purposes.

<sup>149</sup> Access was given to the author because she had worked as both television librarian and film researcher and had some knowledge of the material.

Centre (WAC) have also been consulted. However, while BBC North Region files in the archive prior to the mid-1970s are extensive, few files relating to this region seem to have been sent to the WAC after this date, and files relating to the last thirty years are not available to researchers. Local record offices have also been consulted – in particular the papers of broadcasters Dick Gregson and William Holt and contributor Phyllis Bentley, all of which can be found in the Calderdale office of the West Yorkshire Archives Service (WYAS) while occasionally BBC files and scripts have also been discovered in local record offices. Local and regional newspapers and cuttings have also been consulted, as have the digital editions of *The Guardian*<sup>150</sup> and *The Times*. The BBC does not operate in a political vacuum so in addition it has been necessary to refer to relevant parliamentary committees, Command Papers and the online version of *Hansard*.

It is usually the case that broadcast historians as well as broadcasters build up their own archives, both of programmes or ephemeral material. Interviewees also provided photos and other material from their own collections and two contributors granted me access to films they had made; Patrick Hargreaves' film focusing on one *Look North* reporter was made in 1968 when he was still a student at Leeds College of Art, while Bob Geoghegan's *The Men and Their Movie Cameras*, made after Geoghegan left the BBC, celebrates the achievements of two cameramen who, although freelance, did most of their work for the BBC North Region.<sup>151</sup> A list of regional television feature programmes, acquired when I worked as a film researcher for the BBC, provided a framework for a database of BBC North regional television feature programmes (Appendix Three) compiled in the course of the research to demonstrate the range of regional programmes.<sup>152</sup> However, as Seaton has suggested, it is neither possible nor desirable to analyse every programme. Instead, the thematic approach used here to explore different aspects of both regional and local broadcasting as outlined in the introduction to this dissertation,

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<sup>150</sup> Before 1959, the *Manchester Guardian*

<sup>151</sup> *Chambers in Vision* [16mm film] Prod. Patrick Hargreaves, Leeds College of Art, UK, 1968; *The Men and their Movie Cameras* [DVD] Prod. Bob Geoghegan, Yorkshire Filmmakers, UK, 2005.

<sup>152</sup> Appendix Three: Summary of BBC TV North Region Feature Programmes 1971-1990

is also reflected in the use made of the available sources although personal testimony is used throughout the study.

In providing the historical context as well as the main account of the development of the BBC in Leeds between 1945 and the arrival of regional television in 1968, Chapter Two draws heavily on written archives while Chapter Three, focusing on regional news, brings together interview-based evidence with the documentation held at the YFA. In exploring how Yorkshire was represented in television features made by the BBC in Leeds in Chapter Four, the programmes themselves are used to illustrate the main themes identified across the region's output. In Chapter Five the discussion of the way Bradford had been represented by BBC TV, both nationally and regionally, led to a close scrutiny of programmes depicting the city's urban landscape which, although small in number, attracted debate within the city. The minutes of the BBC Radio Leeds Local Advisory Council are used to show that the 'precarious combination' of Leeds and Bradford, identified by Briggs, was once again evident in the early 1970s. For this reason, and to avoid duplicating Linfoot's work on the development of BBC Local Radio, this study - although making reference to the BBC's other local radio stations in Yorkshire - focuses on Radio Leeds. This research strategy was further suggested by the interviews carried out for the study and the extent to which Radio Leeds pursued a 'walk-in-and-talk' policy in its early years as discussed in Chapter Seven. Oral history is central to Chapter Six, which seeks to reflect the changes in cultures and practices experienced by some of those who worked for the BBC in Leeds in both radio and television.<sup>153</sup> In considering the extent to which those BBC workers attempted to engage their viewers and listeners, it has been necessary to bring together a variety of sources.

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<sup>153</sup> Some aspects of this chapter, mainly relating to regional TV, formed the basis for a paper, "Rumbling and grumbling"? Culture, practice and the BBC in Yorkshire 1945-1990' presented by the author at the Oral History Society Annual Conference, Brighton, 6 July 2013.

## Conclusion

The overall objective of this study is to answer two major but inter-related questions: Was it possible for BBC staff working in the Yorkshire region in the years between 1945 and 1990 to develop distinctive regional and local narratives within their programme output? Is it possible to identify a distinctive regional broadcasting culture or cultures within the BBC in Yorkshire during this period? In attempting to answer these key research questions, it is also necessary to ask who made the programmes, which programmes were produced, why did programmes take the form that they did, for whom were they made, and who was being excluded or marginalized?

As the above discussion has shown, there have been many different approaches to the history of the BBC, and national, local and regional identities are themselves forever changing. This study, while broadly ethnographic in approach but historical in perspective, in taking as its starting-point the personal testimony of those who worked at the BBC in Yorkshire, will not follow one specific theory. Rather, it will attempt to address Hemmingway's accusation that process and product are usually studied in isolation from each other by focusing on daily regional and local production rather than on landmark programmes. An oral history approach will help to explain how regional programmes were produced and mediated. News production has to be the starting point of any discussion on the extent to which it was possible to provide a distinctive regional narrative. But how were regions or areas that were defined not by geography or administrative unit but by transmitter reach to be represented? In attempting to answer this question, as far as it relates to the BBC in Yorkshire in these years, this study will go some way towards answering Vall's call for further inquiry into the part broadcasting may have played in the representation and formation of identity beyond the North East. But, as this chapter has shown, the difficulty of defining the English regions and assessing their significance reached far beyond the BBC.

Much of this exploration has to relate to the BBC itself – to the relationship between its metropolitan centre and its regional outposts, which, as this study will suggest, was in a constant process of renegotiation, and the extent to which regional staff felt that, above all, they were part of a national institution but not necessarily one in which their skills and achievements were always recognized. And if, in contrast to the centre, the region is seen as essentially ‘inferior’ as Russell suggests, then by association was this how BBC regional programmes were also seen? This study will also provide an opportunity for assessing the usefulness and limitations of oral history as a tool for exploring BBC culture but in so doing it will seek to present a world in which many of the working practices are now as obsolete as that of the handloom weaver, and to borrow from E.P. Thompson’s famous phrase, ‘Their crafts and traditions may have been dying. Their hostility to the new industrialism may have been backward-looking’ but the BBC workers who created programmes from film and tape still deserve to be rescued, largely through their own testimony, from the ‘condescension of posterity’.<sup>154</sup> The next chapter, which provides the chronological background to this study, begins this journey.

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<sup>154</sup> E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, 2nd. ed. (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968). Thompson was referring to artisans at the turn of the nineteenth century.

**Figure 1:** Location of BBC studio centres, transmitting stations and regional boundaries (Source: *BBC Handbook 1958*, 205.)



## Chapter Two: Private fiefdoms - broadcasting in Yorkshire after

### 1945

It was also apparent that there was no all-embracing cross-BBC strategy, no overview from the centre of how well each of the BBC's component parts was performing. Pronounced weakness was not being confronted. The operating divisions behaved as baronies, with keep-off signs discouraging interest from the centre.<sup>1</sup>

The advantages of working out of Leeds were various. Not only were we regional, i.e. well away from London scrutiny, we were also a sub-division of that region, thus away from the gaze of even Manchester.<sup>2</sup>

### Introduction

When, in 1968, the BBC launched its new television news magazine east of the Pennines, it could point to both prior and continuing broadcasting achievements in which 'Yorkshire provided a wealth of talent, variety, and much valuable experimental work'.<sup>3</sup> Although the publicity leaflet proudly stated that these achievements were too many to list, the work of the Leeds-based BBC North Region Sound Drama Department, radio programmes *Gardeners' Question Time* and *Have A Go*, and television's *The Good Old Days* were picked out for mention. Yorkshire was already home to one BBC local radio station, albeit 'experimentally', in Sheffield with BBC Radio Leeds due to follow. Had the BBC published a similar leaflet in 1990 listing its Yorkshire achievements, it could have claimed that local radio had expanded but not as had been envisaged in 1968 and that all regional broadcasting had passed to television. It may not have mentioned that for a brief period the Leeds studios had been the headquarters for a larger 'North East' region producing network programmes for BBC1 and BBC2 as well as for the region but it would almost certainly have mentioned the newly formed BBC North region with almost all network production taking place in Manchester from where the region was managed. And while Leeds and Newcastle would continue to make television programmes for

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<sup>1</sup> John Birt, *The Harder Path: The Autobiography* (London: Time Warner, 2002), 251 describing the BBC in 1987.

<sup>2</sup> Alan Ayckbourn, email interview, 13 August 2011, describing BBC Leeds in the 1960s.

<sup>3</sup> 'Look North Now East of the Pennines', WAC N25/38/1



their regions, these would all be news based with increased cross-regional branding across the North Region.<sup>4</sup> The creation of the BBC North East Region in 1986 had also brought local radio together with regional television and this would continue, but local radio stations would be talk-based, also focusing on news.

This chapter relating to the changes in the BBC's presence and role in Yorkshire between 1945 and 1990 will provide a chronological framework for this study. It will consider the effect of pressures both within and without the BBC and will further suggest that the BBC's notion of the purpose of regional broadcasting to both represent the region to itself and to the outside world was frequently contested. It should be pointed out that while this study focuses on the Yorkshire region, as far as the BBC was concerned, Leeds, Yorkshire and even the area 'East of the Pennines' were often synonymous. The chapter begins by considering the development of regionalism within and beyond the BBC after 1945 and then goes on to chart the development of the BBC's activities in Yorkshire until 1990 both in terms of external forces and eyewitness testimony.

## **Regionalism after 1945**

BBC regional broadcasting recommenced in July 1945 and the North Region was soon able to claim that it had exceeded pre-war production levels.<sup>5</sup> Yet, as Briggs has shown, neither its return nor the form it eventually took was inevitable with some within the Corporation believing that there was no need for separate regional programming,<sup>6</sup> and as Seaton has pointed out, the war had 'forced the BBC to regionalize and extemporize'.<sup>7</sup> Contributing to the debate within the Corporation regarding the shape broadcasting should take after the war, the BBC's Regional

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<sup>4</sup> This was the situation from 1990 until 1996 when, as far as regional and local programming was concerned, the North once again became three regions.

<sup>5</sup> *The Manchester Guardian*, 20 September 1946.

<sup>6</sup> Asa Briggs, *The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom: Volume IV: Sound and Vision* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 84-95.

<sup>7</sup> Curran and Seaton, *Power Without Responsibility: The Press and Broadcasting in Britain*, 2010, 126.

Directors had proposed the setting-up of separate regional channels and even suggested that more local broadcasting based on counties or cities might be introduced as soon as the technology became available. The North Regional Director, John Coatman, also argued that regional broadcasting had an important role to play in the democratic process.<sup>8</sup> Regional planning had been a necessary part of the war effort and as John Tomany has observed, ‘this top down regionalism was to set the framework for the post-war period’.<sup>9</sup> At the first meeting of the War Cabinet Committee on Broadcasting in May 1944, a desire had been expressed for ‘the maximum possible amount of regional devolution’.<sup>10</sup> A proposal to merge Regions – the North with the Midlands was suggested – had arisen because of the shortage of available wavelengths, but instead regional broadcasting resumed with three English regional versions of the Home Service in the North, Midlands and West.<sup>11</sup> In addition to being able to ‘opt out’ of the Home Service, regional programmes were transmitted across the nation on either the Home or Light Programmes and across the globe on the BBC’s Overseas Services. Regions could also decide to take programmes from each other.

As far as the BBC was concerned, in 1945 as before the War, the North was defined by the reach of the Moorside Edge transmitter, although the opening of the Stagshaw transmitter in 1937 also meant that north-east England could opt out of the North Region for very limited periods.<sup>12</sup> In editorial terms the North Region defined itself as consisting of the eight most-Northern English counties of which Yorkshire was the largest and the publication of a pamphlet entitled *This is the North of England* in 1949 suggests it was felt that some clarification was

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<sup>8</sup> Briggs, *Sound and Vision*, 89.

<sup>9</sup> John Tomany, ‘The idea of English regionalism’ in Robert Hazell (ed) *The English Question* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), 167.

<sup>10</sup> Briggs, *Sound and Vision*. 34.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 96.

<sup>12</sup> The introduction from the late 1920s of what became known as the BBC’s Regional Scheme is discussed in Asa Briggs, *The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom: Volume II: The Golden Age of Wireless* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965), Paddy Scannell and David Cardiff, *A Social History of British Broadcasting: Serving the Nation: Volume One 1922-1939* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1981) and Mark Pegg, *Broadcasting and Society: 1918-1939* (Beckenham: Croom Helm, 1983). The notion of the North Region was further complicated because the north-east England wavelength was shared with Northern Ireland.

needed.<sup>13</sup> North Region Controller John Coatman declared: ‘It may be that many even of those who live within the borders of the BBC’s North Region are unaware of its full extent. They will find enlightenment within these pages, and will realize that the North Region has greater resources and more varied culture, a larger population and a wider range of physical features that can be claimed by many countries of Europe.’<sup>14</sup> The pamphlet, which included a table entitled ‘The Mighty North’ - designed to show the region’s predominance in population, cities, universities, theatres, newspapers, farming, national parks, fishing, ports and heavy industries<sup>15</sup> - could in part be seen as an attack on the Corporation’s metropolitan bias with Wilfred Pickles remarking: ‘But of course we can’t expect a little place like London to know very much about a big place like Yorkshire!’<sup>16</sup>

This pride in the region alongside the feeling that there might be some confusion as to its boundaries was also expressed in programmes. ‘*We Northerners!*’ in the *Public Enquiry* series, asked, ‘What is a Northerner? Where does the North begin and end?’<sup>17</sup> A ‘brieflet’ produced to inform the discussion admitted there might be difficulties in defining the southern boundary and stressed the diversity of the region, including the character of its inhabitants, those ‘county types’ defying generalisation.<sup>18</sup> But reaction from BBC staff in Newcastle before the programme was due to take place suggests that the North was seen more as a federation rather than a region with shared interests; panellist Phyllis Bentley, at the time regarded within the BBC and beyond as an expert in Yorkshire, received a note suggesting that reference be made during the studio

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<sup>13</sup> Reginald Jordan (ed.), ‘*This is the North of England*’: *The Story of the BBC in the North Region* (Wembley: BBC, 1949).

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>17</sup> *Public Enquiry*, 3 March 1948. The series claimed to reflect the ‘voice of the people’ by pairing up an invited audience in a hall (in this case Stalybridge) by microphone with an expert panel in the studio.

<sup>18</sup> Phyllis Bentley papers, Sound Radio scripts, WYAS Calderdale, PB/B:26/2

discussion to the North East coast, Cumberland and Westmoreland as representatives from these areas had not been included in the round table.<sup>19</sup>

The Festival of Britain was marked by a series of personal reflections on each of the counties of Northern England with Bentley turning ‘a writer’s eye on the Three Great Ridings’.<sup>20</sup> Such ticking off of parts was a recurring feature of regional and local broadcasting – according to North Region drama producer James Gregson, novels for dramatization were deliberately selected from across the region<sup>21</sup> while freelance broadcaster Bertha Lonsdale remembered:

Lancashire and Yorkshire had by far the biggest bite out of the apple of broadcasting – with the north-east coming next. People living in Lincolnshire, Derbyshire, Westmoreland and Cumberland may have very different memories of this period although in Children’s Hour we did our best to cover the whole of this vast heavily populated area of the eight counties of the North Region.<sup>22</sup>

But as the North Region celebrated its constituent counties, its existence was being questioned on air. Reflecting on a writer’s relationship to his region, Herbert Read commented: ‘The North Region, with all due respect to the administration of the BBC, is not a region in anything but an arbitrary geographical sense - its bounds determined partly by administrative convenience and partly by the vagaries of electric magnetic radiation’. Having pointed out that even the Yorkshire Ridings had very distinct characteristics, he declared that ‘region’ was being used in the ‘debased modern sense to which we might give the name provincialism’.<sup>23</sup>

The report of the first postwar enquiry into broadcasting – chaired by Lord Beveridge and presented to Parliament just as Read was dismissing the BBC’s regionalism as pragmatic – criticised the ‘Londonization’<sup>24</sup> of the Corporation and called for greater autonomy for its regions.<sup>25</sup> With the return of a Conservative government no action was taken regarding the report

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Script, *My County: Yorkshire*, North of England Home Service, 29 July 1951, WYAS Calderdale, PB/B:37

<sup>21</sup> *The Autobiography of James Gregson*, edited by Barry D Smith (Brighouse: E R Smith Publications, 2011), 198.

<sup>22</sup> Bertha Lonsdale, *They’d Taken the Train Away*, unpublished typescript, Bradford City Library, 22.

<sup>23</sup> Script, *Contemporary Northern Literature: The Writer and his Region*, 28 January 1951, WYAS Calderdale PB/B:37

<sup>24</sup> Cited in Curran and Seaton, *Power and Responsibility*, 173; Briggs, *Sound and Vision*, 384.

<sup>25</sup> Asa Briggs, *The BBC: The First Fifty Years* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 62.

but, as Seaton points out, its critique of the BBC was remembered when it came to deciding the structure for commercial television.<sup>26</sup> However, in its turn ITV's regional structure would determine the boundaries of the BBC's television regions – the splitting up of the Granada franchise in 1968 led to the BBC's decision to transmit a separate news magazine programme from Leeds. The Pilkington Committee, reporting in 1962, had little to say about the BBC's regions but did support the BBC's case for the development of local radio on the VHF band but this had to wait until the Labour government, as part of its strategy to destroy pirate radio stations, introduced legislation in 1966.<sup>27</sup> And, although the government ignored Pilkington's call for the complete restructuring of ITV, the decade was to see increased convergence between the public and commercial broadcasting sectors.<sup>28</sup> In 1968, when the Yorkshire viewers could see their own regional TV magazine programmes for the first time, they may have felt there was little to choose between BBC and ITV.

Meanwhile, the regional debate continued within the Corporation. In 1963, after concerns were expressed by the North Region Advisory Council that the BBC's activity in the region was less than might be expected in a area of its size and importance, Paul Findlay was asked to report on the situation.<sup>29</sup> Findlay, who was Head of TV Administration, was also tasked with identifying problems that were common to all the English Regions and began his report by restating the role of the BBC's regions as defined by Gillard in a 1955 paper, *An Extension of Regional Broadcasting*:<sup>30</sup>

- (a) To serve the purely regional requirements of the domestic and local audience in a region.
- (b) To enable a region to be properly represented in national and international broadcasting, by contributing programmes which are characteristic of itself which bear the stamp of its own

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<sup>26</sup> Curran and Seaton, *Power and Responsibility*, 3rd. ed., 173.

<sup>27</sup> Briggs, *The BBC: The First Fifty Years*, 329.

<sup>28</sup> See, for example, Crissell, *An Introductory History of British Broadcasting*, 119.

<sup>29</sup> *Problems of the English Regions (with special reference to the North Region), Report by Paul Findlay WAC T16/647*

<sup>30</sup> For more on Gillard's paper see Asa Briggs, *The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom: Volume V: Competition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 624-627.

individuality, and which can be better done in the region than anywhere else...<sup>31</sup>

But Findlay also reiterated Gillard's conclusion that, in fulfilling the BBC's mission, the regions were there to inform rather than to entertain, an approach which would help determine the development of BBC regional broadcasting including John Birt's redefinition of the role of the Corporation's regional centres thirty-five years later. Although it might have been the case that now any entertainment worth broadcasting was likely to have national appeal, Findlay went on to claim: 'Opinion in London, and much opinion in the Region itself, is that Light Entertainment has now become so concentrated in London that it cannot be profitably produced from anywhere else. Even the strongest advocates of Light Entertainment in North Region would agree that most of the indigenous material has disappeared.' But, according to Findlay there was also a lack of TV production skills – he again attributed his observations to regional TV producers: 'Most of them will concede some lack of professionalism in their work but argue that this is hardly their fault. With some exceptions they have little or no contact with their equivalent departments in London and are therefore cut off from the main source of professionalism'.<sup>32</sup> Not surprisingly, he recommended measures that he believed would ensure more mobility and a greater interchange of staff between London and the regions. Findlay concluded that Area (broadcasting to part of a region) rather than Regional stations would better cater for increased output of 'the journalistic type', claiming that this 'meets its greatest success when it is addressed to an audience which, in social, economic or ethnic terms, represents at least in some degree a single entity'. This, he acknowledged, would have to wait until resources were available to provide the necessary transmitters and could only be done in consultation with the Independent Television Authority (ITA).<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Findlay Report, WAC T16/647

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid. See below for Findlay's comments on the North Region's drama and news output.

During the 1960s, as the BBC was reconsidering the size and function of its regions,<sup>34</sup> regional policy was given new emphasis by the 1964 Labour government with Yorkshire and Humberside (which now included Lincolnshire but not the North Riding) becoming one of the new Economic Planning Regions.<sup>35</sup> However, the influence of the regional councils was limited by the collapse of the National Plan in 1967<sup>36</sup> and the proposal in the Redcliffe-Maud Report on Local Government (1966-1969) to create six provinces, including Yorkshire, each with its own council, was not supported by the incoming Conservative government.<sup>37</sup> But the post-war years also witnessed an establishment of institutional cultural regionalism from above with the introduction of regional arts councils. Economist J.M. Keynes, the first chairman of the Arts Council, told a radio audience: ‘We of the Arts Council are greatly concerned to decentralize and disperse the dramatic and musical and artistic life of this country, to build up provincial centres and to promote corporate life in these matters in every town and county’.<sup>38</sup> But as with the BBC, the relationship between the regions and London was frequently contested; although during Jennie Lee’s time as Arts Minister (1964-1970) regional autonomy was increased,<sup>39</sup> the 1984 Arts Council report on future strategy concluded that it was ‘inequitable that London, which holds about one-fifth of the population in England, should attract about half the Council’s spending’.<sup>40</sup> At the same time, the number of regional newspaper titles was declining, as was the

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<sup>34</sup> Hugh Greene in *The Third Floor Front: A View of Broadcasting in the Sixties* (London: The Bodley Head, 1969) prioritized local broadcasting.

<sup>35</sup> Yorkshire and Humberside Economic Planning Council, *A Review of Yorkshire and Humberside* (London: HMSO, 1966), 1.

<sup>36</sup> Michael Keating, ‘From functionalism to political regionalism’ in Robert Hazell (ed) *The English Question* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), 145.

<sup>37</sup> A province was defined as an area ‘in which there exists among its inhabitants a sense of provincial identity, rooted in history, economic traditions or geographical facts’, quoted in *Statistical News*, issue 24-32 (London: HMSO, 1974), 27.

<sup>38</sup> Quoted in Arts Council of Great Britain, *The Glory of the Garden: The Development of the Arts in England* (London: Arts Council, 1984) iii.

<sup>39</sup> Arts Council, ‘The 1960s: A Time of Balance’, accessed 5 October 2012, <http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/who-we-are/history-arts-council/1960s/>

<sup>40</sup> *The Glory of the Garden*, 9; Redcliffe-Maud’s 1976 report for the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, *Support for The Arts in England and Wales*, had endorsed the role of the regional arts associations as the main agencies for the development of the arts.

degree of independent ownership.<sup>41</sup> Even before the *Guardian* made its move to London in 1959, the *Yorkshire Post* had sought to position itself as a national newspaper.<sup>42</sup> But while newspapers followed the market, commercial television, competing with the press for advertising revenue, was also required to produce regional content. And at the same time, and partly in response to the new regionally-based competition, the BBC also had to reconsider what provision it should be making for regional and local broadcasting and how this might be funded. This chapter goes on to show how the BBC's response to this challenge affected its activities in Yorkshire.

## The BBC in Leeds 1945-1968

‘A school for playwrights...’<sup>43</sup>

In 1945 as in 1939, Yorkshire was part of the BBC's North Region with studios in Newcastle, Leeds and Liverpool as well as Manchester. Taking up a producer's post in Leeds in 1949, Patrick Campbell observed that the studio was ‘primarily devoted to drama’.<sup>44</sup> Not only did the Leeds-based North Region Sound Drama Department provide a base for the BBC's late expansion away from Manchester and east of the Pennine watershed, but it also provides evidence of the problems sometimes encountered in representing the region to the nation.



**Figure 2:** Studio One, BBC Leeds - the move to Woodhouse Lane in 1933 provided the BBC with its biggest single studio space in the North of England. (Source: author's collection)

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<sup>41</sup> Curran and Seaton, *Power without Responsibility*, 2010, 251; Mick Temple, *British Press* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 2008), 95.

<sup>42</sup> Mildred Gibb and Frank Beckwith, *The Yorkshire Post: two centuries* (Leeds: Yorkshire Conservative Newspapers Co., 1954), 70.

<sup>43</sup> James R. Gregson, ‘We started a school for playwrights’ *This is the North of England*, 1949.

<sup>44</sup> Patrick Campbell, *I'll Try Anything Once* (London: New Millennium, 1997), 339.



The BBC had maintained its presence in Leeds throughout the war but in the autumn of 1946, when the North Region announced its future broadcasting plans, James Gregson was present to outline the region's new policy for radio drama. The producer later claimed that he had insisted on the Leeds location for his new drama unit.

Apart from the fact that I'd never felt comfortable when working previously in the overcrowded Manchester studios, I wanted to raise the status of the sub-station in which I'd done my best pre-war radio work ... Moreover, I was determined to live on my own side of the Pennines.<sup>45</sup>

Gregson, well known as a dialect writer, had acted in, written and even produced plays in the Leeds studio before the war.<sup>46</sup> Working in a mill from the age of twelve, his involvement in amateur theatre led to a job as a 'front of house' manager in Huddersfield where by 1920 he was already being referred to as the 'local playwright'. He had taken a prominent part in the founding of amateur theatre companies in Leeds, Huddersfield and Bradford before giving his first radio talk in 1924.<sup>47</sup> His 'humorous north country' play, *Devil A Saint*, was performed in the Leeds studio for radio listeners in between matinee and evening performances at the Leeds Civic Playhouse.<sup>48</sup> Having worked as a journalist on the *Leeds Mercury*, he went on the road with his own company, the Yorkshire Players, which included fellow Huddersfield Thespian actor Philip Robinson who would later work alongside Gregson at the BBC as the first producer of *Have A Go*. Wilfred Pickles recalled that when he went over to Leeds before the war it was either to work as an announcer or to take part in one of Gregson's plays.<sup>49</sup> Nor had Gregson's work been confined to the North Region - his 'long' biography of the socialist Robert Owen was transmitted as the 'chief feature' across the regional stations.<sup>50</sup> And when war came, just as Pickles' Yorkshire accent meant he was called to London to work as an announcer, so it was Gregson's that in 1941 led to him getting a staff job with the BBC. By this time Robinson was already

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<sup>45</sup> *The Autobiography of James Gregson*, 195

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 158.

<sup>47</sup> *Craven Herald and Pioneer*, 2 February 1962

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> Wilfred Pickles, *Between You and Me*, (London: Werner Laurie, 1949), 124.

<sup>50</sup> *Manchester Guardian* October 22 1938.

working for the Overseas Service: ‘Hearing that still more Northern voices were required by the American section – Southern accents and intonations were regarded as “cissy” by North American listeners – he mentioned me.’<sup>51</sup> However, when Gregson arrived in London he found himself working as a scriptwriter for *Radio News Reel*<sup>52</sup> and it was from there that he returned to Leeds to launch the North Region’s post-war radio drama department.

Gregson’s plans included the possibility of creating a radio drama school and a thirteen-part serialisation of Phyllis Bentley’s best-selling novel *Inheritance* as part of his aim to dramatize what he referred to as ‘the large-scale material in fiction that reflects the life of the North’.<sup>53</sup> By this time, a second producer, Rex Tucker, had been appointed. While Tucker produced the series, Bentley’s misgivings concerning interference from Gregson suggests that the two producers worked together<sup>54</sup> and Gregson did agree to her suggestion of Edna Sutcliffe, a sewing machinist, for a leading role. Whether it was to give the production a greater sense of place or to get some good publicity in advance of transmission, Tucker and Gregson took the author and cast on a tour of some of the locations featured in the novel, presenting this as yet another way in which the North Region’s Drama Department was breaking new ground.<sup>55</sup> Although members of the BBC’s Listening Research Panel were said to have ‘appreciated’ the series’ ‘local setting and idiom’, it was clear that opting out of the Home Service programme could be problematic – some listeners, although agreeing that the region should produce its own programmes, had been following a serial at the time *Inheritance* was scheduled.<sup>56</sup> Nor did this please Val Gielgud, the BBC’s Head of Drama until 1963, who complained about lack of coordination; regional head

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<sup>51</sup> *The Autobiography of James Gregson*, 186

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 187.

<sup>53</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, 20 September 1946. This press conference was reported widely in the local and provincial press – the *Yorkshire Evening News*, 19 Sep. 1946, was keen to report that Leeds was to become one of the ‘chief centres’ for radio broadcasting, a detail ignored by the *Guardian*.

<sup>54</sup> Phyllis Bentley papers, Diary, 18 Jun., 27 Aug., 16 Oct., 1946, WYAS Calderdale Archives, PB/C

<sup>55</sup> Cuttings, PB/B:19

<sup>56</sup> ‘...it is clear that many regretted losing *Orley Farm* and found the time of the repeat inconvenient’, LR/6671, WAC R9/62/1

John Coatman responded with the suggestion that the Home Service should from time to time make room for one of the region's 'big Northern serials'.<sup>57</sup>

By this time Gregson was in the process of producing his next adaptation using a format, new to radio drama, which he christened the 'three-decker':

...my idea was to pull the novel to pieces, if necessary, and re-assemble as much of it as possible and desirable into three long acts. As each act would last at least an hour, it allowed more scope for the building of climaxes and the development of character without sacrificing any of the quality and atmosphere of the story. This "three-decker" treatment also made it easier for our listeners to keep their appointment with us.<sup>58</sup>

To ensure this venture - a dramatization of James Lansdale Hodson's novel *Jonathan North* - received as much publicity as possible, film star Robert Donat was cast in the title role 'at a fee hitherto undreamed of in North Regional history'.<sup>59</sup> Following the success of *Jonathan North* with both critics and the Listener Panel,<sup>60</sup> other notable northern novels received the 'three-decker' treatment. And, in holding a school for radio dramatists, as Gregson explained to the magazine *Yorkshire Life*: 'We hoped to give the group a firm idea of how a radio play is shaped on the floor of the studio from words on paper to a living dramatic entity.'<sup>61</sup> This included tutoring writers in studio techniques. However, according to Gregson, the discovery of new writers appears to have met with more limited success, the exception being R. C. Scriven, a Leeds journalist, who, encouraged by Tucker, had turned his own experience of an eye operation undergone without anaesthetic into a thirty minute verse drama, *A Single Taper* for the Third Programme:

I think it's the purest bit of radio writing I know. It's more than a picture in words - it doesn't call for a single sound effect other than speech - one not only sees, hears and smells and feels what is

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<sup>57</sup> Coatman to SC, 31 December 1946 BBCWAC R9/62/1

<sup>58</sup> *The Autobiography of James Gregson*. 198

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Leslie Baily praised Gregson for his 'bold step of presenting a serial in three large instalments', *Lancashire Evening Post*, 30 November 1946, having previously criticized the thirteen-part serial for its failure 'to give breadth to the picture'; after the second instalment the BBC's Listening Research Department could report not only had opinion of the production 'reached an exceptionally high level' but a preference had also been shown for its three-part presentation, WAC R9/62/1.

<sup>61</sup> Muriel Burton, 'A Radio Drama Experiment', *Yorkshire Life*, Vol. 1, No. 7 (January - March 1948), 194.

going on; one is on the table in his place living through a vital, painful and rewarding experience.<sup>62</sup>

Announcing his intention to serialize good northern novels, Gregson had gone on to say:

We are out to reflect the Region in drama at its best and most representative. In the old days there was a little too much of the small kitchen comedy. That will still have its place because it's one aspect of the Region which we cannot afford to neglect, but we want something more than this parochial drama.<sup>63</sup>

He had previously expressed the same sentiment to the *Yorkshire Evening News* telling the paper: 'Local patriotism is to be no excuse for broadcasting local piffle.'<sup>64</sup> This was certainly the view of Val Gielgud whose support for regional drama was at best half-hearted. As he said in his 1956 survey of radio drama: 'For the enthusiastic Regional Programme Authority – and perhaps even more for the youthful and ambitious Regional Drama producer – it was intolerable to contemplate activities confined within the limits of the comedy of the kitchen or the melodrama of the parish pump.' He believed it was the job of London, not Leeds or Manchester, to produce the work of writers like Priestley who had 'metropolitan' reputations. The best actors and the best producers and even 'let it be whispered so softly – professional skill' were all to be found in London and the regional producer, 'however accomplished', just could not compete.<sup>65</sup> Nor did Gielgud approve of using amateur actors.



**Figure 3:** BBC North Region's 'school for playwrights' in 1947 - Gregson is on the far right. (Source: *Yorkshire Life*, 1 (January - March 1948) 7, 194.

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<sup>62</sup> *The Autobiography of James Gregson*, 198

<sup>63</sup> Cuttings: *Huddersfield Daily Examiner*, WYAS Calderdale PB/B19

<sup>64</sup> *Yorkshire Evening News*, 6 March 1946, quoted in Briggs, *Sound & Vision*, 101.

<sup>65</sup> Val Gielgud, *British Radio Drama 1922-1956: A Survey* (London: George G. Harrap & Co, 1957), 129.

It was Gregson who in 1949 contributed the section on drama to the pamphlet *This is the North of England* where he listed the unit's achievements: more than 800 plays received and read in two years; a short primer of radio writing techniques sent to those with promise; a two-day writing school for the twenty most promising writers; over 100 'new' actors discovered and the training of both 'new' and 'established' actors in radio technique; a showcase for regional writers of national standing (Priestley, Holtby, Hodson are cited); radio adaptations of films, including *Brief Encounter*; producing original drama; and increasing the reputation of the department's output to northern, national and overseas audiences.<sup>66</sup> The inclusion of *Brief Encounter* suggests that the Leeds drama producers did not believe that their brief was limited to depictions of the region. Patrick Campbell, describing the work of the unit in 1951, pointed out that the plays produced - 'most of them from the drama studios in Leeds' - had not been confined to Northern or even British drama and that the 'once widely credited myth' that a play from the North had to be in dialect had now disappeared although he did feel the need to mention that dialect plays were still performed. But, Campbell emphasised, in producing drama to be heard across the network, the North Region was contributing 'to the broadcast drama of the nation'.<sup>67</sup>

Gregson had left the BBC staff before Campbell's arrival but he continued to produce as well as adapting and writing radio drama for the region, and in the late 1950s Gregson wrote a radio talk in which the department's ambition is evident:

We had to enlarge our conception of regional drama. And this didn't mean finding dramatists who could write in dialects such as Derbyshire, Cumberland or Lincolnshire. These had their place, of course, but beyond all such localised accents and themes there is in the North Region a vast amount of material, the plays and novels of Regional writers of a National standard or reputation, sometimes not dealing with the Region at all but usually presenting a broader reflection of life in it.<sup>68</sup>

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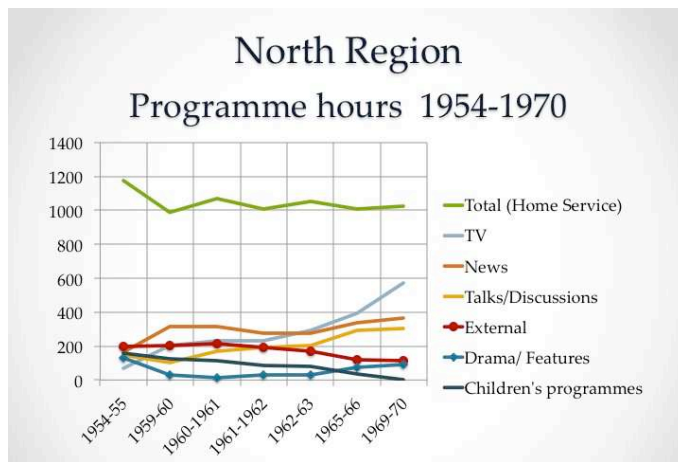
<sup>66</sup> *This is the North of England*, 1949,

<sup>67</sup> Patrick Campbell, 'There's plenty of drama in the North', *BBC Year Book 1951* (London: BBC 1951), 59.

<sup>68</sup> 'Radio Drama', North Region Artists - J.R. Gregson 1956-1965, WACN18/2757/1

The challenge then was ‘to maintain our regional culture and integrity, and yet achieve metropolitan standards of technique in acting and production’,<sup>69</sup> to be at least as good as the drama producers in London.

There were three drama producers in Leeds when Patrick Campbell joined the station in 1949 but when Alfred Bradley arrived there ten years later he discovered he was the North Region’s only radio drama producer.<sup>70</sup> The development of television and the expansion of news meant there was competition for both resources and staff - Bradley’s immediate predecessor, Vivian Daniels, having acquired ‘ambidextrous’ skills (the term bi-media had presumably not then been invented) was fully occupied with television drama in Manchester. As Figure 4 suggests North Region output in the Drama/Features category reached a low of thirteen hours in the year 1960-1961.



**Figure 4:** North Region Programme Hours 1954-1970 (Source: *BBC Handbooks* 1956, 1960, 1964, 1967, 1971)

Despite the frequent requests by North Region management asking for money to fund a second sound drama post Bradley worked alone until the mid-1960s, but this was not a good

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Even this post had to be fought for - Miller, Assistant Head of North Region Programmes, asked for Gielgud’s support when, in February 1958, it seemed as though the North’s one remaining sound drama post would not be filled, WAC N25/420/1

time financially for the BBC.<sup>71</sup> According to Briggs, by 1964 the ‘financial situation of the BBC had deteriorated to such an extent’ that it affected output across the Corporation<sup>72</sup> and, as Paul Findlay observed in his 1963 report, regional news had increased substantially since the early 1950s while drama across the English Regions had fallen by 63%. He argued that the establishment of an expanded drama unit in Manchester would be ‘one of the most effective ways’ in which broadcasting could help to create a cultural centre outside London:

Much exists on the ground already. Granada and ABC produce most of their drama in Manchester, including the top audience puller "Coronation Street". North Region has, perhaps, been the most prolific of all regions in the production of new writers (many of whom have been fostered and introduced by the BBC's Sound drama unit in Leeds). It is true that few actors live in Manchester and most Television shows involve the importation of a London cast. Given, however, a greater BBC activity in Manchester, added to that of Granada and ABC, there would be a reasonable possibility of creating a school of drama there which could develop its own professional standards and might also provide badly needed nourishment for the Manchester theatre.<sup>73</sup>

However, North Region Controller Robert Stead used Findlay's report to justify the case for an extra drama post in Leeds, arguing that not only would this give Bradley more time to develop his work with northern writers but also to keep London informed about interesting new developments in the region, including Granada's activities. Stead described Bradley as ‘under constant and heavy pressure’ and as ‘a tired and worried man – the work he has on hand at present will take him nearly two years to complete at the present rate’.<sup>74</sup>

When the second Leeds drama post was eventually advertised in 1964, there was initially some difficulty in finding a suitable candidate. Ken Severs, the BBC's Leeds Representative – the title had replaced that of station director – queried the placing of the advert. ‘We are sure the sort of chap we are looking for does not seek his jobs in the Yorkshire Post or the Liverpool Daily Echo,’ Severs wrote to Stead, suggesting instead the *Times Educational Supplement*

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<sup>71</sup> Gregson was regularly paid to read scripts for both Daniels and Bradley as they were too busy.

<sup>72</sup> Briggs, *Fifty Years*, 348

<sup>73</sup> *Problems of the English Regions*, WAC T16/647

<sup>74</sup> WAC NR Drama Dept N25/420/1 January 29 1964

because the paper was read by county drama organisers.<sup>75</sup> Bradley, a southerner, had been an actor and then Leicestershire's schools' drama advisor.<sup>76</sup> In the end the job went to Alan Ayckbourn, a writer and theatre director just recovering from a West End flop, who was known to Bradley. Ayckbourn remembers in his first year at the BBC being personally responsible for producing approximately fifty radio plays of various lengths up to ninety minutes for Radio 2, Radio 4 - 'some, we produced exclusively for BBC North but the majority for the main national network – and occasionally Radio 3'.<sup>77</sup>

Unlike Gregson, Bradley had no difficulty in discovering and developing the talent of new regional writers. Stan Barstow remarked that although Daniels had 'discovered' him in the sense of being the first to buy his work (a short story), it was Bradley who gave him the confidence to try his hand at radio drama.<sup>78</sup> Many writers have paid tribute to the part Bradley played in launching their careers but perhaps his role was most succinctly described by Alan Plater who emphasized that it was to do with a 'way of working': 'The record speaks for itself. The Leeds studio's output of plays, short stories and anthology programmes like "The Northern Drift" has introduced the work of hundreds of new writers in recent years. Many of these have moved on to other market places, writing novels, stage and television plays, or films.' He added: 'The Drama Department has always been a lively meeting point for people involved in regional theatres, arts centres and associations, and education: primarily a workshop, it has also been a place to meet and discuss, and occasionally an asylum.'<sup>79</sup> In a feature for *The Guardian* Simon Hoggart reported that Bradley spent hours every week visiting theatres, watching productions and encouraging those involved as well as giving some writers a 'second break' by advising them on how to write for radio and that Bradley also read every script that was sent to him, returning

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid., Severs to Stead, June 22 1964.

<sup>76</sup> Stan Barstow, *In My Own Good Time* (Otley: Smith Settle, 2001) 93.

<sup>77</sup> Alan Ayckbourn, email interview with the author, 13 August 2011.

<sup>78</sup> Barstow, *In My Own Good Time*, 93.

<sup>79</sup> *Guardian*, 6 June 1969.



them with comments for the author.<sup>80</sup> Henry Livings remembered his reaction when Bradley asked him to write a radio play: 'I asked him to tell me something which was impossible to do on radio and he said movement. So I wrote about a man walking down a street talking to himself. The very fact that it was produced was what gave me the encouragement I needed.'<sup>81</sup>

The open door policy referred to by Plater was carried over into the pubs of Leeds; not only were they places to encounter people who might have potential as writers but, according to Trevor Griffiths, soon to make his name as a playwright but who then worked at the BBC in Leeds as an education officer, the radio actors were 'filling the pubs' at weekends. Griffiths believes Yorkshire Television later picked up much of this cultural scene.<sup>82</sup> Another writer Bradley worked with at this time was Brian Thompson<sup>83</sup> who would later act as writer and presenter on many of the television feature programmes produced by the BBC in Leeds, helping to win several awards for the station.

There were both advantages and disadvantages in being away from the main centres of BBC power. There was freedom to experiment as Ayckbourn discovered:

Once I'd settled in, I took to booking a cast, largely locally based from nearby reps, to record, say, an officially commissioned Afternoon Theatre play already scheduled for transmission in a month or two's time but then retaining the team of actors and studio technicians for an additional day to record a short additional extra production, unscheduled and thus technically non-existent. Some of our most interesting work was done this way. If the rogue piece turned out well, we would offer it up to the network and more often than not it was subsequently transmitted. If not, it was conveniently 'lost'.<sup>84</sup>

And this ability to experiment was not confined to producers: when a writer declared he was going to stop bringing plays to Leeds because there were no stereo facilities, studio manager Geoff Wilkinson made the necessary adaptations, and producers even came up from London just to make use of the Leeds stereo studio.<sup>85</sup> The series *The Northern Drift* - based on an idea from

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<sup>80</sup> *Guardian*, 26 July 1969.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>82</sup> Trevor Griffiths, interview with the author, Boston Spa, 28 June 2011

<sup>83</sup> Barstow, *In My Own Good Time*, 95.

<sup>84</sup> Alan Ayckbourn, email interview, 13 August 2011.

<sup>85</sup> Geoff Wilkinson, interview with author, 28 September 2011

Plater who also acted as compiler - began on radio in 1964 as a vehicle for new creative writing from the region in prose, verse and songs; Bradley described it as aiming somewhere between the ‘egg head at one end and the pop culture exponents at the other’.<sup>86</sup> And even when the series was tried out on television and so had to be recorded in Manchester, it remained very much a Leeds affair with Bradley producing and Leeds-based TV producer Barney Colehan directing. But, even in 1965, the projection of northern culture beyond the region could still prove to be difficult – when asked about a slot on BBC 2, the network’s Controller, David Attenborough, replied: ‘I was interested and amused by much of this, and yet I find it hard to convince myself that it would attract and please a national audience.’<sup>87</sup> This contrasts with the proposal twenty years earlier to air *Jonathan North* on the Light Programme; then it had been Gregson and John Salt, Director of North Region Programmes, who had decided that the speech in the first episode was ‘too broad’ and would have to be changed and, in any case, Donat would have had to be brought back anyway as no recording existed.



**Figure 5:** Still shot for the *Northern Drift* television titles. The painting is taking place on the retaining wall of the Leeds inner-city ringroad adjacent to the BBC studio. (Source: BBC WAC N31/1/1)

When it was suggested that Bradley and Ayckbourn would have to share the big studio with the new regional television news magazine when it was launched in 1968, the drama producers initially agreed to the proposal but it became apparent that the timing of television’s

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<sup>86</sup> Bradley to Stead, 17 February 1965, WAC N25/42/1

<sup>87</sup> Controller BBC2 to Head North Region Programmes, ‘The Northern Drift’, 11 October 1965, ‘Northern Drift’, WAC N31/1/1

studio requirements would make this difficult and it seemed that radio drama production might have to move out of the region. Martin Esslin, who had replaced Gielgud as the BBC's head of radio drama, came to the support of the Leeds producers:

The suggestion that North Regional drama productions should be done in Birmingham or Bristol is straight out of Alice in Wonderland. If we accept the basis for regional drama output, namely that it justifies itself by giving expression to a local culture with local voices which are only available on the spot, then it is clearly nonsense to make Yorkshire voices travel to Birmingham or Bristol, where incidentally, the studio space is equally overcrowded and the technical facilities are worse than Leeds.<sup>88</sup>

Instead, the decision was taken to accommodate the regional television team in a nearby church hall while new premises were being built adjacent to Broadcasting House but the refurbishment and upgrading of the Leeds drama studio desk were given the go-ahead even though it had been decided that the unit would move to Manchester when the new BBC building in Oxford Road was completed.<sup>89</sup>

The work of the North Regional Drama Department provides evidence of how a very small group of broadcasters based in Leeds continually sought to reposition themselves in relation to the BBC's metropolitan centre – despite the lack of encouragement and often also resources - by attempting to make their work at least as good as that produced in London as well as enabling the BBC to play a significant part in the cultural life of the region. But it also helped to provide a foundation for the BBC's development as a regional broadcaster - contacts made or talents engendered by Bradley and his colleagues were passed to television when it arrived in Leeds.



**Figure 6:** Cutting from *Ariel*, the BBC's in-house journal, showing the recording in 1970 of the play *Fred* by Alan Plater starring Roy Kinnear. Bradley is shown centre front while studio manager Geoff Wilkinson is on the left. (Courtesy, Geoff Wilkinson)

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<sup>88</sup> Esslin to Miller, 'North Region Drama Output 1968/9', 4 May 1967, North Region Drama Department 1966-1976, WAC N25/524/1

<sup>89</sup> Mansell to Bradley, 12 December 1969, N25/524/1

## News, information and entertainment from Leeds

The number of staff in Leeds working alongside the drama producers also began to increase after 1945. While before the war the Leeds establishment might typically number around fourteen (including secretaries and ‘charwomen’ but no production staff), by 1951 it stood at forty-four posts including eleven from the Engineering Division.<sup>90</sup> Nor was the activity of the drama producers confined to that medium – Gregson is described as Features Producer in the BBC’s biennial staff lists but features were often presented in dramatic form as was the case with *Repeal! Repeal!*, a programme about the Corn Laws written by Asa Briggs and produced by Gregson.<sup>91</sup> Patrick Campbell recalled that the first programme he worked on in Leeds was a drama-documentary on the life of Don Robins who in 1930 had converted the crypt of his Leeds church into a shelter for homeless and workless men. When Robins died in 1948, thousands had attended his funeral and although this was very much a Leeds story, according to Campbell the programme transmitted in January 1950 was repeated the following month, this time to a national audience and was also transmitted in Holland and Germany.<sup>92</sup> But Campbell was to find that regional features could cause local controversy. He cites *Quarry Hill Experiment*, which made use of dramatic reconstruction as well as on-location recording, ending with a discussion between members of the Quarry Hill Tenants Association and the council’s Housing Committee.<sup>93</sup> In her 1974 study of Leeds’ Quarry Hill estate, a development which was considered to be pioneering when it was built in the 1930s, Alison Ravetz judged the programme (and Campbell’s script) to have been ‘serious and sensitive’ but when it was transmitted in 1951

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<sup>90</sup> WAC BBC Staff Lists

<sup>91</sup> Briggs, *Sound and Vision*, 101.

<sup>92</sup> Campbell, *I’ll Try Anything Once*, 343-345. *The Story of Don Robins*, BBC North Region Home Service, 24 January 1950, was produced by Tucker and researched by Campbell.

<sup>93</sup> BBC Home Service, 6 April 1951.

the use of the word ‘dump’ by one participant in the hour-long programme resulted in some tenants drawing up a petition demanding an apology from the BBC.<sup>94</sup>

In addition to producing radio features and drama Campbell recalled driving around the region to record interviews, not only for feature programmes but occasionally for news.<sup>95</sup> But given the size of the Leeds establishment, staff frequently helped their colleagues and it was Campbell who was asked by Outside Broadcast (OB) producer Barney Colehan to script a programme for television, *The Story of the Music Hall*, which focused on the history of Leeds City Varieties.<sup>96</sup> Colehan became one of broadcasting’s greatest impresarios and it was he who produced the first North Region TV programme, a live OB from the Theatre Royal in Leeds on 13 October 1951, the day after the Holme Moss transmitter went on air<sup>97</sup> but Colehan was already known to listeners as the producer of *Have A Go!* The series was the invention of Gregson’s fellow Thespian Philip Robinson<sup>98</sup> after John Salt, returning from a wartime posting in the United States, had asked for ideas for a ‘quiz programme with audience participation’.<sup>99</sup> Much of the programme’s success was due to the popularity of presenter Wilfred Pickles – Scannell makes use of the series when discussing the ‘sociable’ dimension of broadcasting, pointing out that Pickles alternates between a ‘voice’ intended for listeners at home and his ‘Yorkshire’ voice (and local references) addressed to the show’s participants.<sup>100</sup> Originally a regional programme, *Have A Go!* moved to the Light Programme after the first series and in 1947 Colehan replaced Robinson who had moved to Manchester to take charge of Outside Broadcasts. But, as Dave Russell points out, when *Have a Go!* went national, the *Radio Times*

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<sup>94</sup> Campbell, *I’ll Try Anything Once*, 351-352; Alison Ravetz, *Model estate: planned housing at Quarry Hill, Leeds* (London: Croom Helm for the Joseph Rowntree Memorial Trust, 1974) 134-135. Peter Mitchell quotes from the script in *Memento Mori: The Flats at Quarry Hill* (Otley: Smith Settle, 1990) 21, 84, 85.

<sup>95</sup> Campbell, *I’ll Try Anything Once*, 353

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 371

<sup>97</sup> W.D. Richardson, ‘The Northern Television Outside Broadcasts: A Description of Television Arrangements in connection with the Opening of Holme Moss’, *The BBC Quarterly*, Vol. 7 (April 1952-January 1953), 55-61 [56].

<sup>98</sup> Robinson had moved to Leeds taking in the post of Production Assistant, BBC Staff List, November 1946.

<sup>99</sup> Quoted in Briggs, *Sound and Vision*, 109.

<sup>100</sup> Paddy Scannell, *Radio, Television and Modern Life*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996) 50.

stressed Pickles' Halifax origins, just as the series 'implanted Pickles and his version of amiable northernness within the national consciousness. In its distinctive way it did much to sustain a kind of sub-political populism as any other northern cultural product in the twentieth century'.<sup>101</sup> Pickles himself believed that the BBC had an important role in maintaining regional identity - 'It was important that the individuality and independence of regional life and accents should be preserved and reflected by the BBC. It was one of the fundamental freedoms'<sup>102</sup> - but he doubted that this would be carried into television.<sup>103</sup>

*Have A Go!* was transmitted from village halls, factories, hospitals and other locations across the country and many of Colehan's other TV and radio broadcasts were also OBs. It was probably this, together with the location of the long-running *Good Old Days* at the Leeds City Varieties, which enabled him to base himself in Leeds throughout his BBC career. Colehan produced *Top Town* for radio in which teams from two towns would compete weekly. According to regional publicity officer Reginald Jordan: 'Through the medium of this idea, new variety talent had an opportunity to take the air, and at the same time the programmes reflected the highly individualistic characteristics of the different towns.'<sup>104</sup> Transformed for TV, the series became *It's A Knockout* and, when produced for Eurovision, *Jeux Sans Frontieres* with an audience of 160 million.<sup>105</sup> But Colehan, whether it was *It's the Beatles* recorded amidst screaming fans at the Liverpool Empire in December 1963<sup>106</sup> or the pilot programme for what would become *Top of the Pops*,<sup>107</sup> was also busy making other music and light entertainment programmes. According to Pat Pearson who worked in the Leeds studio in the 1960s: 'We were

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<sup>101</sup> Russell, *Looking North: Northern England and the National Imagination*, 140.

<sup>102</sup> Wilfred Pickles, *Sometime...Never*, (London: Werner Laurie, 1951) 121

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 130-131.

<sup>104</sup> Reginald Jordan, 'Broadcasting and the Countryman', *Yorkshire Life*, Vol. 2, No. 5 (July-September 1950), 138.

<sup>105</sup> Gary Whannel, 'Winner takes all: competition' in Andrew Goodwin and Gary Whannel (eds.) *Understanding Television* (London: Routledge, 1990), 103-115 [112]; for further discussion of these programmes see also Alan Clarke and John Clarke, "'Highlights and action replays" – ideology, sport and the media' in Jennifer Hargreaves, *Sport, Culture and Ideology* (London: Routledge, 1982), 62-88 [76-79].

<sup>106</sup> 'The Beatles at the Liverpool Empire' [<http://www.old-liverpool.co.uk/Beatles.html>] 'The Beatles and the BBC' [[http://www.bbc.co.uk/liverpool/content/articles/2005/12/07/beatles\\_spenarchive\\_feature.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/liverpool/content/articles/2005/12/07/beatles_spenarchive_feature.shtml)], accessed 15 May 2011.

<sup>107</sup> The programme was based on Radio Luxembourg's *Teen and Twenty Disc Club* presented by Jimmy Savile.

quite proud that we had this famous television producer there and people would come and see him. We were quite used to seeing the likes of Bernard Cribbins and Ken Dodd walking down the corridor to see Barney.<sup>108</sup> People liked to work with both Colehan and Alfred Bradley and their ability to both discover and attract the talent in their respective fields gave both men some leeway in dealing with the BBC beyond Leeds.

Also based in Leeds was Ken Ford, ‘Talks Producer (Agriculture)’<sup>109</sup> who made and later presented *Gardeners’ Question Time*, and from the end of the war until the 1960s there was also a Leeds-based general Talks Producer.<sup>110</sup> But, at least as important, was the part the studio played in extending the BBC’s reach - contributors came in to the Woodhouse Lane studios to take part in many different programmes, talking not only to the region but sometimes to the nation or to overseas audiences. The long-running series *The Northcountryman*, produced in Leeds, was so rooted in the region that *The Dalesman* magazine published three volumes of anthologies based on extracts from the series. Introducing the 1962 anthology, Director-General Hugh Carleton Greene wrote:

One of the complaints most often made by broadcasting, as with other mass communication, is that it destroys local culture and tradition, reducing everything to a level of grey cosmopolitan uniformity... ‘The Northcountryman’ is an example of a programme which could only spring from a healthy regional soil, and its success is both a justification of the BBC’s faith in regional broadcasting, and a tribute to the determination of the people of the North of England to keep alive the values and traditions they believe in.<sup>111</sup>

According to Greene this was because the contributors were ‘listeners’ rather than professional broadcasters but this distinction was not always clear. The BBC contributor files show that, having left his staff post as a senior producer, Gregson produced plays, contributed talks (sometimes recording two in the same night), researched a TV documentary, took part in radio

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<sup>108</sup> Pat Pearson, interview, Leeds, 4 February 2010.

<sup>109</sup> It may be that this was not originally a staff post – in 1947 Brian Branston was producing inserts for *Farmer’s Half Hour* from Leeds as described by Muriel Burton, ‘Yorkshire Farmers use Radio’, *Yorkshire Life*, Vol. 1, No. 5 (July-September 1947), 139.

<sup>110</sup> BBC Staff Lists, WAC

<sup>111</sup> Hugh Carleton Greene, ‘Forward’ in Stanley Williamson (ed.), *The Third Northcountryman* (Clapham: Dalesman, 1962), vii.

panels and even acted as an adjudicator for *Top Town*.<sup>112</sup> Yet none of this was referred to in the compilation programme to mark *The Northcountryman*'s tenth anniversary when Gregson, as a contributor, was presented by Bert Parnaby, the Leeds producer, as being 'in front of the microphone when I was in my pram somewhere in the same county'.<sup>113</sup> Nor was there any mention of contributor William Holt's record as a broadcaster yet he had been named in the *BBC Yearbook* as one of the 'Radio Personalities of 1948'.<sup>114</sup> Freelancer Bertha Lonsdale, who also featured in the series, had resigned from her librarian's job in 1948 because of the amount of work she was doing for the BBC.<sup>115</sup> When Holt and Lonsdale gave talks to the Halifax Authors Circle it was as though they represented the BBC<sup>116</sup> and in 1964 Gregson returned to the Leeds studio with a contract to produce *The Northcountryman*.<sup>117</sup>

Although *The Northcountryman* was judged by the regional management in Manchester to be 'popular with the audience', it was based on reminiscence and it was felt the series needed to take a new direction when Gregson's contract ended in 1965. Colin Shaw, Assistant Head of North Regional Programmes, summed this up in a letter to Gregson: 'The new version will change direction somewhat, laying more emphasis on the present-day countryside and today's North outside the big towns... I feel, however, that in 1965, with greater leisure and easier access to the countryside, there is a new need for the programme to serve.'<sup>118</sup> Bertha Lonsdale had scripted and edited a weekly what's on programme, *The Week Ahead*, but in 1966 she was informed that, because of the BBC's financial situation, this would in future be done by the

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<sup>112</sup> WAC RCONTI James R. Gregson Copyright File I 1936-1962, File II 1963-1967, Talks I 1945-1962, N18/2757 North Region Artists J.R.Gregson 1935-1965, N18/5520 1966-1970

<sup>113</sup> *Northcountrymen Past and Present*, BBC North Region Home Service, 18 November 1962.

<sup>114</sup> BBC, *BBC Year Book 1949* (London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1949). 70. Holt was particularly praised for his broadcasts on the BBC's overseas services.

<sup>115</sup> According to Lonsdale's literary executor, James Ogden, she 'wrote at least 300 scripts, including over 50 plays, 30 dramatised adaptations, 48 stories, 70 features and 36 talks', '"A Remarkable Yorkshirewoman": Bertha Lonsdale, 1910-1977', *The Bradford Antiquary*, Third series, No. 75, 2011.

<sup>116</sup> Halifax Authors' Circle, Minute Books, Calderdale Archives, MISC:741

<sup>117</sup> WAC N18/2757/2

<sup>118</sup> Shaw to Gregson, 23 August 1965 WAC N18/2757/2



regional newsrooms.<sup>119</sup> But Lonsdale was also becoming increasingly aware of the competition posed by television when it came to making programmes, citing the refusal of a group of young Bradfordians to attend a recording because *Quatermass* was ‘on the telly’.<sup>120</sup> However, it was not only the expansion of television but of news, which was to change both the direction of regional broadcasting and the BBC’s activities in Yorkshire.

Despite the BBC’s presence as a regional radio news broadcaster, the first regional news programmes in the North of England were provided by ITV. Granada launched in 1956 with a five-minute local news programme on weekdays – in the following year Brian Trueman, graduate of the BBC North Region’s *Children’s Hour* and many Gregson productions, became the second presenter of the programme, now called *Northern Newscast*.<sup>121</sup> It was not until 1958 that the BBC began to provide its own five-minute news opt-outs with ‘illustrative’ films.<sup>122</sup> But in his 1955 report Frank Gillard had argued that newsgathering was central to regional broadcasting<sup>123</sup> and in his 1963 investigation Paul Findlay had not only made the case for increased co-operation between London and the regions but also for investment in news studios when the BBC’s financial situation improved.<sup>124</sup> At a Board of Management meeting on 16 September 1963 the BBC’s Editor of News and Current Affairs recommended doubling the North Region’s expenditure on news, expressing the hope that area news services might be provided in both Yorkshire and Merseyside although recognising this was not yet possible because of ‘transmitter dispositions’. Greene accepted the recommendation as far as Yorkshire was concerned but reiterated that the financial situation made such a development impossible.<sup>125</sup> An article in the *Yorkshire Post* in 1965 - partly based on an interview with Robert Stead, then

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<sup>119</sup> Letter, Graham Miller to Bertha Lonsdale, 13 July 1966, WAC Artists: Bertha Lonsdale 1966-1973 N18/5980. Yvonne Adamson had acted in a similar role in Newcastle.

<sup>120</sup> Bertha Lonsdale, *They’d Taken the Tram Away*, unpublished typescript, Bradford City Libraries, 256

<sup>121</sup> Brian Trueman, ‘Yesterdays’ in John Finch, Michael Cox, Majorie Giles (eds.) *Granada Television – The First Generation* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003) 66-69

<sup>122</sup> WAC R84/36/1

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> ‘TV Staff: Regions: North Regional Enquiry 1963’, WAC T31/431

<sup>125</sup> Board of Mangement meeting, 16 September 1963, WAC T31/431

Controller of the North Region - referred to plans for 'area' broadcasting in Yorkshire and Lincolnshire drawn up in 1962. The 'two factors' cited which might make this a reality were the government's proposals for regional planning and the arrival of 625 lines in the North of England which, as well as supplying BBC2, would make it possible to split transmissions. The article also referred to the more immediate difficulty of getting news film over the Pennines to Manchester, reporting that there were plans to install a telecine machine in Leeds by the summer<sup>126</sup> but even this had to be deferred.<sup>127</sup> Yet it was not only the prevailing financial and technical limitations that led to Yorkshire being underrepresented in the regional news programme; in 1964 news reporter John Burns, based in Leeds, complained that Yorkshire and Lincolnshire film stories were not being used.<sup>128</sup>

It was perhaps inevitable that to feed the BBC's news requirements in both Manchester and London there had to be some degree of non-capital investment in Leeds. When John Burns who had been a BBC staff reporter in London moved back to his native Yorkshire in 1961, he was the Corporation's only reporter in the North Region: 'If there was any factual broadcasting to be done there was only one person who could do it because there was only one person to do it.'<sup>129</sup> In 1964 a News Assistant post was created in Leeds to give Burns more time to go out on the road and 'to strengthen news coverage of the West Riding' on radio and television.<sup>130</sup> In addition, a Leeds-based radio producer was responsible for providing a weekly opt-out from the *Today* programme.<sup>131</sup> But it was the Independent Television Authority (ITA)'s<sup>132</sup> decision, when it had to consider the allocation of new contracts beginning in 1968, to divide the Granada region, which finally turned the BBC's desire for area broadcasting east of the Pennines into reality. In

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<sup>126</sup> 'Local broadcasting gets BBC priority', *Yorkshire Post*, 10 February 1965. A telecine (TK) machine scans film so it can be video-recorded or transmitted on television.

<sup>127</sup> Reed (Head of Admin., North Region) to HNA, 27 September 1965, WAC R28/646/1

<sup>128</sup> John Burns, Leeds to Assistant News Editor [North], 4 November 1964, WAC R28/646/1

<sup>129</sup> John Burns, interview with author, 6 April 2011.

<sup>130</sup> Reed to HNA, WAC R28/646/1

<sup>131</sup> Cindy Ritson, interview with author, Leeds, 9 March 2011.

<sup>132</sup> Renamed the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA) in 1972.

addition to its regional programmes Yorkshire Television (YTV) would join the other four main contractors responsible for supplying network programmes to ITV and would begin broadcasting on 29 July 1968.<sup>133</sup> Having established that it was already possible to split transmissions to Lancashire and Yorkshire leaving Winter Hill to serve the North West and Holme Moss to serve Yorkshire, the Board of Management declared that area broadcasting from Leeds should be ‘a top priority project’ to go ahead as soon as possible.<sup>134</sup> Bill Greaves, BBC Television News’ Chief Sub-Editor, was given the job of Area News Editor with the remit of getting on air ‘at all costs’ three months before YTV although the building planned for the new service could not be ready until sometime in 1969 at the very earliest. In the meantime the BBC took over a church hall just around the corner from its radio studios; Greaves recalls going to Leeds to take his first look at the building: ‘I held my nerve and eventually we got it going’ in time for the 25 March 1968 deadline. When YTV went on air, also on time, it was from the first specially built colour television studios in Europe but, according to Greaves, the point was not to compete with YTV as a station but with its news magazine.<sup>135</sup> And, while the adoption of the name Yorkshire Television<sup>136</sup> by the ITV company may have been as much to do with giving an identity to the bidding consortium as with reflecting that of the region, the BBC, which had thought in terms of the new service as serving the Leeds area or that east of the Pennines, decided to use BBC North<sup>137</sup> as its logo but this did little to define its target audience.

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<sup>133</sup> Jeremy Potter, *Independent Television in Britain: Volume 3: Politics and Control 1968-1980* (London: MacMillan, 1989), 19.

<sup>134</sup> Findlay to C.P.S. Tel. 1 February 1967, WAC R28/646/1

<sup>135</sup> Bill Greaves, interview with author, 20 April 2010.

<sup>136</sup> The original name was Yorkshire Television Network but the ‘Network’ was soon dropped from the broadcaster’s ident.

<sup>137</sup> ‘BBC North West’ was the new ident for the regional news programme from Manchester and BBC North East for the programme from Newcastle while the radio region was still BBC North.

## **‘Broadcasting in the Seventies’: regions, areas and communities**

The BBC’s Policy Study Group’s plan for the restructuring of radio, published as *Broadcasting in the Seventies* and controversial both within and outside the Corporation, was published in July 1969.<sup>138</sup> Leeds-based news reporter John Burns remembers accompanying Grahame Miller, the North Region’s Head of Programmes, to hear the proposals at a meeting in London and Miller saying to him: ‘That’s the end of our BBC’ and, Burns adds, ‘it was the end of our BBC, and it was the end of Grahame very soon afterwards’.<sup>139</sup> Coming after the launch of Radio One and of BBC local radio in 1967, in many ways *Broadcasting in the Seventies* simply made explicit changes already taking place in the BBC and the wider broadcasting world – it had been Gillard’s intention that local radio would eventually replace regional radio in England. In Leeds the main objections made against the proposals centred around radio drama and the loss of the regional radio opt-out. Bradley and Ayckbourn spoke out against the proposals at a meeting of the North Regional Advisory Council held in Leeds in October 1969. Present at the meeting was Gerard Mansell, Controller of Radio Four and one of the plan’s architects. Bradley rejected Mansell’s claims that good relationships between London and the region had made it easier to ‘sell’ programmes to the network; his experience was that it was difficult to get regional work by new writers accepted by Radio Four, citing his experience with *The Northern Drift* series as evidence. Furthermore, the minutes recorded, ‘Mr Bradley could not see how the proposed changes would lead to better broadcasting in the Seventies if regional opt-out broadcasting was to be eliminated. This, in his opinion, could only make the broadcasting service more deodorized and plastic’. Mansell admitted that in the future there might be fewer opportunities for ‘some

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<sup>138</sup> BBC, *Broadcasting in the Seventies* (London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1969). See also Briggs, *Competition*, 721-810. Among the press speculation in advance of the document’s publication the *Yorkshire Post* had expressed concern that the proposals for regional broadcasting would have a negative effect on the BBC in Leeds, *Yorkshire Post*, 7 July 1969.

<sup>139</sup> John Burns, interview, 6 April 2011.

types' of regional drama and pointed out that London drama producers did not have the advantage of opt-out slots in which to try out new work. Ayckbourn argued that if the opt-out hours were to be lost, it should be up to the regional producers to decide what programmes should fill the spaces they were allocated on the network, otherwise 'he could never promise an author that his play would be broadcast, only that it might be broadcast if somebody in London approved of it'.<sup>140</sup> The tributes to Bradley expressed by Alan Plater, Simon Hoggart and others, came out of the considerable debate around these proposals.<sup>141</sup>

David Hendy suggests that Bradley accommodated himself to the changes introduced in *Broadcasting in the Seventies*: by 1978 he was praising London for showing 'perception and sensitivity' when considering regional submissions.<sup>142</sup> Ayckbourn had returned to the theatre in 1970. Despite reservations from North Region Controller Robert Stead about the wisdom of using one studio for all radio drama and features,<sup>143</sup> Bradley - together with Ayckbourn's replacement, Tony Cliff - moved to Manchester in 1975 where they continued to discover and encourage new talent<sup>144</sup> but their departure marked the end of thirty years of radio drama production in Leeds. When, in 1978, D-G Ian Trethowan came to Leeds to mark Radio Leeds' move to Woodhouse Lane, he described Studio One as 'probably the single most exciting creative studio in BBC radio at that time'.<sup>145</sup>

While *Broadcasting in the Seventies* was largely concerned with radio, it also 'foreshadowed' the creation of eight new television regions in England<sup>146</sup> to replace the existing regions whose boundaries had been 'devised by engineers rather than sociologists'.<sup>147</sup> In fact, these new

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<sup>140</sup> North Regional Advisory Committee, 16 October 1969, WAC R78/66/1

<sup>141</sup> See above, 16-17

<sup>142</sup> David Hendy, *Life on air; a history of Radio Four* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 126

<sup>143</sup> Stead to CNRE, 4 August 1969, N25/524/1B

<sup>144</sup> 'Tony Cliff obituary', *The Guardian*, 1 March 2012, accessed 11 January 2013, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/tv-and-radio/2012/mar/01/tony-cliff>; interestingly Cliff is referred to here as the originator of the drama triptych, a format pioneered by Gregson.

<sup>145</sup> *Radio Leeds: 'A bloody waste of time'*, BBC Radio Leeds 24 June 1983.

<sup>146</sup> *The British Broadcasting Corporation, Annual Report and Accounts for the year 1970-1971, Command Paper 4824* (London: HMSO, 1970), 65

<sup>147</sup> BBC, *Broadcasting in the Seventies*, 7.

editorial regions were just as much determined by transmitter reach and, as the *BBC Handbook* for 1971 acknowledged, there would be reception problems:

It may be that some viewers will receive a better quality picture by having their television aerial aligned to a transmitter carrying programmes other than those from their own 'home' region'. As an example, parts of Harrogate – editorially looking towards BBC North, whose Regional Headquarters is Leeds – may well be better served in terms of picture quality by the Bilsdale transmitter, which carries programmes from BBC North-East, whose Regional Headquarters is Newcastle.<sup>148</sup>

And this applied just as much to ITV programmes. The *Handbook* went on to suggest that a local television service might help to reduce such anomalies: 'Priority in time must be given to establishing some kind of service for every town, over and above the provision of the "correct" one'.<sup>149</sup> The restructuring also removed the notion of 'area' broadcasting; in Leeds this meant that the BBC Representative post disappeared and Area News Editor Bill Greaves now became Regional Television Manager, no longer answerable to Manchester but to the Controller, English Regions, based in Birmingham. The intention was that by 1971 each of the English Regions would be producing 'weekly programmes of general interest' in addition to their news magazines.<sup>150</sup> Regional television managers would have complete editorial control and decide how to allocate their own budgets.<sup>151</sup> Nor was this increased emphasis on the region confined to the BBC – James Potter notes that between 1970 and 1975, following pressure from the IBA, programming made specifically for their regions by the five major companies (including YTV) rose from between four and five hours to between six and seven hours a week.<sup>152</sup>

*Broadcasting in the Seventies* not only endorsed the success of the 'local radio experiment' begun in 1967 but called for its extension across the country.<sup>153</sup> The go-ahead for this

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<sup>148</sup> BBC, *BBC Handbook 1971* (London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1971), 57

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid, 56

<sup>151</sup> Patrick Beech, *New Dimensions in Regional Broadcasting: BBC Lunch-time Lectures Eighth Series (5)* (London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1970); Bill Greaves, interview, 21 April 2010.

<sup>152</sup> Jeremy Potter, *Independent Television in Britain: Volume 3: Politics and Control 1968-1980* (London: MacMillan, 1989), 82. The remaining companies also experienced a similar rise in output made specifically for their region.

<sup>153</sup> Briggs, *Competition*, 769.

experiment by the BBC was a result of the Wilson government's intention to provide an alternative to offshore broadcasting<sup>154</sup> and two of the eight 'experimental' stations that were eventually launched happened to be in Yorkshire. It is not the intention here to duplicate the accounts of the origins and development of BBC local radio provided by Briggs, Linfoot and others,<sup>155</sup> but to provide some background to the development of the stations in the Yorkshire region. According to the 1966 White Paper: 'Since the essential purpose of the local station is to give expression to local interests and aspirations, it seems right that its income should derive so far as is possible from local sources and not from the general licence fee'.<sup>156</sup> That Yorkshire had two of the eight 'experimental' stations was because the councils in Leeds and Sheffield had each agreed to contribute the £50,000 per year that the BBC thought necessary to cover each station's running costs. In Leeds a change in control of the council from Labour to Conservative meant that even before it had been decided that the station should go ahead, the amount pledged by the council had halved. Forty years later, Radio Sheffield's first manager, Michael Barton, reflected: 'The city council under Ron Ironmonger couldn't have been more positive (they had to pay for our first two years). And the freedom to "get on with it" given to us by the BBC meant that we could experiment, make mistakes and not feel under central pressure'.<sup>157</sup> But, writing in the *New Statesman* in 1969, Radio Leeds' manager Phil Sidey observed: 'But, all in all, the slightly bizarre method of financing local radio, outlined in the White Paper, could not honestly be called a success'.<sup>158</sup> Sidey considered alternative sources of funding for local radio and how these might influence content but – not surprisingly – concluded that the licence fee was 'the

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<sup>154</sup> The Home Office *White Paper* (Cmnd 3169, HMSO, 1966) also authorized the BBC to provide a service offering 'continuous popular music'. Operating on one of the frequencies previously used by the Light Programme, this service was to become Radio 1.

<sup>155</sup> Briggs, *Competition*, 634-649 and in passim; Linfoot, *A History of BBC Local Radio in England*.

<sup>156</sup> Quoted in Briggs, *Competition*, 640n

<sup>157</sup> 'Radio Sheffield's 40th Birthday', accessed 18 January 2014,

[http://www.bbc.co.uk/southyorkshire/content/articles/2007/10/02/michael\\_barton\\_40th\\_birthday\\_feature.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/southyorkshire/content/articles/2007/10/02/michael_barton_40th_birthday_feature.shtml)

<sup>158</sup> Phil Sidey, 'Your Radio or Theirs? Reprinted from the *New Statesman* 11th April 1969' in Phil Sidey, *Hello, Mrs Butterfield... The hilarious story of 'Radio Irreverent', the first two years of BBC Radio Leeds* (Claverdon: The Kestrel Press, 1994), 102.

least unfair way of financing broadcasting; and it has the huge advantage of being the least liable to result in undesirable or unlawful pressure being put on broadcasters to make them change their programmes'.<sup>159</sup>

Sidey's other main point in the article was the central role that should be given to news:

'News is what local radio is all about. It is why local radio must not be corrupted by cowardice, by hidden influence, by taking the easy way out and linking with that other wife of Caesar, the local press.'<sup>160</sup> While Radio Sheffield, opening in 1967, had obtained its news from re-versioning national news as well as from local agencies, Radio Leeds was the first BBC local radio station to do its own newsgathering. Having informed the BBC's Local Radio Committee that there were no suitable news agencies in the area, the station was given three extra posts to make this possible.<sup>161</sup> According to Sidey, of the twenty-four staff originally appointed, twenty-one (including himself) were journalists, and he had wanted the station to be 'journalistically biased' because he believed that at the time places like Leeds were generally neglected by the media.<sup>162</sup> Allan Shaw, the BBC's first local radio news editor, remembered these journalists bringing both contacts and local knowledge to the new station.<sup>163</sup> The BBC's proposals for the introduction of local radio had always included using VHF<sup>164</sup> but ownership of VHF sets was slow in spreading<sup>165</sup> - some of those who worked in local radio blamed the conservatism of set manufacturers.<sup>166</sup> Conscious of the 'wave of disinterest' in the BBC's local radio plans even within the Corporation and lacking a budget for advertising, Sidey set out to get as much publicity for the station as possible but not all of his tactics were appreciated by those at other

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<sup>159</sup> Ibid, 112.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid, 108.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid, 154.

<sup>162</sup> *Radio Leeds: 'A bloody waste of time'*, BBC Radio Leeds, 24 June 1983.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid.

<sup>164</sup> Briggs, *Competition*, 624.

<sup>165</sup> 'Local Radio Stations', *Hansard*, 25 November 1969, accessed 19 January 2013, <http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1969/nov/25/local-radio-stations>

<sup>166</sup> *Radio Leeds: 'A bloody waste of time'*.



stations.<sup>167</sup> However, despite Sidey's occasional tussles with BBC management, after two years getting Radio Leeds off the ground he moved on to become Deputy Editor of *Nationwide* and, subsequently, Head of the BBC's Network Production Centre at Pebble Mill, Birmingham, where he pioneered daytime television. It is likely that Sidey's character was known to those who appointed him and it is interesting to compare his emphasis on local news with the approach taken by Gillard in an article he wrote for the *Yorkshire Post* in 1963:

Each station would undertake a continuous and detailed task of modern radio-journalism, aiming to present on the air, in many different forms and through a multitude of local voices, the running serial story of local life in all its aspects. Through the direct and intimate medium of broadcasting, the local radio station would try to parallel the service which a good local newspaper can and does provide for its public.<sup>168</sup>

It is tempting to think that Sidey was sent to Leeds to do just that.

Having judged the local radio experiment to be a success, in August 1969, Postmaster General John Stonehouse gave the BBC permission to open another twelve radio stations, including two in the Yorkshire region, to be funded by the licence fee. Radio Teesside opened on 31 December 1970 and Radio Humberside on 25 February 1971 but these, as their names suggest, would cover a much larger area than had been envisaged at the time of the local radio experiment. The election of a Conservative government in June 1970, intent on introducing commercial radio, had for a time made the future of BBC Local Radio look very uncertain but in the end it was agreed that the opening of the new BBC stations could go ahead although this would be limited to the number approved by the previous government. Another consequence of the growth in the number of stations was that the pioneering stations had to take on inexperienced staff as their original staff moved on to work in the new stations.<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>167</sup> Linfoot, *A History of BBC Local Radio in England*. These included giving the name of the station to a greyhound to ensure a mention in the *Yorkshire Post* and adopting a talking budgie as a mascot.

<sup>168</sup> Frank Gillard, 'Radio Station in Every City', *Yorkshire Post* 11 December 1963, quoted in Briggs, *Competition*, 632. He was to repeat the phrase 'running serial story of local life' in 'Sound Radio in the Television Age', *BBC lunch-time Lecture*, second series, 6, 11 March 1964.

<sup>169</sup> Nigel Fell, interview, 5 October 2011.

Although both regional television and local radio were by now established in Yorkshire, their future was still uncertain. As far as television was concerned the changes outlined in *Broadcasting in the Seventies* seemed to culminate with the introduction of a second regular feature opt-out in January 1976 and a corresponding increase in staff. Announcing the change, BBC English Regions Controller Michael Alder claimed: ‘In addition to doing their own programmes, the eight centres are on duty round the clock to provide the networks with full news cover. It’s the role of a national and local journalist all in one.’<sup>170</sup> The best programmes - or at least those thought to be of more than regional interest - were showcased in the *Network* series shown on Saturday evenings on BBC2. In 1974 the Leeds television team had moved into their new studios, five years after they had originally been due to be completed.<sup>171</sup> This was a time when practices were being worked out in both media: Radio Leeds was building up its sports coverage helped by the success of its teams, particularly Leeds United FC; in Sheffield education producer Dave Sheasby was helping to discover new writing talent;<sup>172</sup> in Humberside local radio producers were working with the local health authority and NHS on a pioneering cancer awareness series.<sup>173</sup> But, at the same time, both the BBC’s regional and local broadcasting were under scrutiny. An internal BBC paper argued that any changes to meet ITV competition should be made only if these contributed to the effectiveness of the organisation as a whole.<sup>174</sup> Patrick Nuttgens, chair of the BBC’s North Advisory Council, commented: ‘Regional programmes, however, had to achieve a standard comparable to national programmes.’<sup>175</sup> At this time he was involved in scripting and presenting television programmes for the BBC in Leeds. Reporting in 1974 the Crawford Committee, having looked at broadcasting coverage in Wales, Scotland, and

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<sup>170</sup> ‘North Region Publicity 1966-1975’ WAC R84/36/1

<sup>171</sup> See Joan K. Laprell, ‘The B.B.C Team Look (optimistically) North’, *Yorkshire Ridings*, (Winter 1975-76), 92

<sup>172</sup> ‘Dave Sheasby obituary’ *The Guardian* 1 April 2010, accessed 20 January 2012, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/tv-and-radio/2010/apr/01/dave-sheasby-obituary>

<sup>173</sup> BBC Audience Research Department, *Annual review of BBC audience research findings, No.4, 1976/7*, (London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1978)

<sup>174</sup> Briggs, *Competition*, 999

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*

the rural areas of England where they were told there was some ‘regret’ at the loss of regional radio, recommended that the BBC experiment in extending its local radio coverage using low power transmitters.<sup>176</sup>

Before the Crawford Committee had even reported, the Labour government, returned to power in February 1974, set up a committee to look into the future of broadcasting under the chairmanship of Lord Annan.<sup>177</sup> Radio Sheffield’s manager Michael Barton was amongst those who presented evidence to the Annan committee,<sup>178</sup> while Nigel Fell, then a Station Assistant at Radio Leeds, met with the committee on two separate occasions because he was also a delegate from his trade union, the Association of Broadcasting Staffs (ABS).<sup>179</sup> Fell remembers feeling ‘intimidated’: ‘They decided their evidence taking would start in Leeds and we were ranged before the great and good of the Annan Committee’. As far as BBC local radio was concerned, the Annan Committee liked what they saw, praising the ‘enthusiasm and commitment’ of the staff and noted the BBC’s claim that the most successful stations were those with relatively small communities, but also felt that the service was compromised by budgetary constraints. Not only would the licence fee need to be increased if local radio was to continue to develop within the BBC but the Committee questioned the appropriateness of such local provision by ‘the national broadcasting organisation, financed by everyone’s television licence fee’.<sup>180</sup> But the state of the eight English regional television stations was seen to be less satisfactory:

We found that the staff there felt isolated and disregarded. Morale was low. No wonder; for, organised as they are at present, they do not form sensible production units. The stations were located in the same place as ITV companies. As one producer put it to us, "Wherever there’s an ITV company, there will be a BBC flag flying from a house nearby". But their budget and facilities were totally inadequate to compete with the ITV company on equal terms. Nor were they used to provide the sole BBC coverage of the area for the network. Their staffs told us that London crews would come out to film for London produced programmes and in general, the regions were expected by the London Departments to be "bizarre and rustic". Some of them felt

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<sup>176</sup> *Ibid*, 998; Linfoot, *A History of BBC Local Radio in England*, 8

<sup>177</sup> The Annan Committee was announced on 10 April 1974, while Crawford reported in November: Home Office, *Report of the Committee on Broadcasting Coverage* (Cmnd 5774 HMSO 1974)

<sup>178</sup> Linfoot, *A History of BBC Local Radio in England*, 222.

<sup>179</sup> Nigel Fell, interview with author, Bradford, 5 October 2011.

<sup>180</sup> Home Office, *Report of the Committee on the Future of Broadcasting* (Cmnd 6753 HMSO 1977) 88-89

that the BBC's metropolitan bias had intensified in the last two years; one view put to us was, "If it's west of Reading, it hasn't happened". It was worse for those towns that were not in the same towns as Network Production Centres.<sup>181</sup>

In Leeds there was no intention to compete with YTV except as far as local programmes were concerned, and many of those interviewed for this study pointed out that, even in Leeds, they had access to the BBC's wider resources. Nor did the interviewees associate this period with low morale. But Annan's point about duplication, the implication that the regions would not do as good a job, is central to this study.

Annan went on to conclude that regional programmes should be made in the Network Production Centres,<sup>182</sup> as had been the case before *Broadcasting in the Seventies*, although the 'island sites' might be permitted to do local news if this was more efficient. It also proposed that the regulation of local radio would pass from the BBC and IBA to a Local Broadcasting Authority to oversee 'plurality and diversity' but emphasized that, when awarding licences, the new authority should bear in mind the 'public services' undertaken by BBC stations. The report even cited a lecture by the former Radio Sheffield manager Michael Barton in which he referred to various radio appeals to listeners ranging from helping to fight a moorland fire to publishing job vacancies.<sup>183</sup> Two members dissented from the committee's recommendation – former trade union leader Tom Jackson and journalist Marghanita Laski made the case for the extension of BBC local radio, questioning whether commercial stations could provide the same service and arguing that the BBC stations could act as local news-gatherers as well as benefiting from the facilities, including training, available within the Corporation.<sup>184</sup> As it was, the recommendation was not acted on. Instead, in 1980 the Home Office gave both the BBC and IBA permission to

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<sup>181</sup> Ibid, 100

<sup>182</sup> Manchester, Birmingham and Bristol produced both radio and TV programmes for the network but the production teams for regional programmes in those centres were part of English Regions as were the other five regional TV stations which, standing alone, were known as 'island sites'.

<sup>183</sup> *Report of the Committee on the Future of Broadcasting*, 223. Barton's lecture, *BBC Radio in the Community*, was delivered on 26 October 1976 by which time he had become General Manager, BBC Local Radio.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid. 226-228. Despite this, Jackson, an ex-BBC Governor living in West Yorkshire, also stressed that he wanted to see commercial local radio continue to provide 'both choice and competition'.

expand their local radio services,<sup>185</sup> but if the BBC was to make such provision across the country then its notion of localism had to change. When Radio York was launched in 1983, it was there not just to cover the city of York but also the county of North Yorkshire. However, as early as 1970 the prospect of ‘going West Riding’ was being discussed in Leeds,<sup>186</sup> and by 1972 the Advisory Council was asking, ‘How local is local?’<sup>187</sup> In 1973 the Advisory Council minutes recorded that, ‘in response to their request that the Radio Leeds editorial coverage area should be defined, the BBC had said that Radio Leeds should cover an area that can be afforded on the budget’.<sup>188</sup> But the acquisition of a Medium Wave frequency in 1972 and a new VHF transmitter in the following year meant that the station could be heard across West Yorkshire. Local politicians across the county were happy to see Leeds as their station: in Wakefield the new district council expressed interest in providing a studio space while the new West Yorkshire County Council offered to pay for a link from County Hall.<sup>189</sup> But as the new VHF transmitters had a much greater reach, some Leeds people were picking up Teesside, Manchester or Durham,<sup>190</sup> while many of those living around Sheffield could only pickup Radio Humberside.<sup>191</sup>

## **From ‘island site’ to Network Production Centre**

Despite the limitations on the expansion of local radio, the BBC was also struggling to keep up with rising wages. The debate about where the BBC might make cuts was both public and protracted but, while cuts would have to be made across the Corporation, regional television was seen by some to be particularly vulnerable. Derbyshire-based *Guardian* columnist Robin Thornber commented: ‘Some pessimists feel that even the regional opt-out slots, on Tuesday and

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<sup>185</sup> Home Office, *Local Radio Working Party – Third Report* (HMSO 1980). See also Linfoot, *passim*.

<sup>186</sup> Radio Leeds: Local Radio Advisory Council, Meetings, Minutes 14 September 1970, WAC R81/10/1

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*, 1 September 1972

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*, Minutes 17 March 1973

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*, Minutes 3 November 1973; Talks had also been held with council representatives from Huddersfield, York, and Bradford. The Advisory Council’s recurring debate about Bradford is discussed in Chapter Five.

<sup>190</sup> Radio Leeds: Local Radio Advisory Council, Meetings, Minutes 9 November 1970, WAC R81/10/1

<sup>191</sup> ‘Broadcasting Reception’, *Hansard*, 1 March 1972, accessed 18 January, 2013

<http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1972/mar/01/broadcasting-reception>

Friday evenings, could be threatened. London controllers resent their regional independence and have little regard for their quality.<sup>192</sup> Although the Board of Management had proposed a 12.5% cut for regional television compared to 2.5% in network television,<sup>193</sup> in the end it was decided that the forty-two Friday opt-outs per year would be maintained but the Tuesday programmes would be cut to twenty. Each region would no longer do its own closedown and the regional radio news bulletins on Radio 4 would cease.<sup>194</sup> The BBC continued to roll out local radio stations as planned but, beginning with Radio Norfolk in August 1980, it was intended that these would operate with less than half the staff of existing stations.<sup>195</sup> When Radio York opened in 1983 it transmitted for only around eight hours on weekdays and six at weekends with Radio Leeds providing the sports coverage.

While the Peacock Committee (1985-1986), set up to investigate ways of funding the BBC, may have added to any feelings of uncertainty amongst BBC staff, it was a weekend conference at Elvetham Hall, Hampshire, in July 1985 attended by the Corporation's Governors and Board of Management that was to have most impact on regional television and local radio. The purpose of the conference was to agree to economies made necessary because in 1979 the government had agreed to a licence fee of only £58 – the BBC had asked for £65. Although, the aim was to make substantial savings and cut jobs, a 20% increase in regional news magazine budgets and a restructuring of English regional and local broadcasting was agreed.<sup>196</sup> In April 1986 five regional Heads of Broadcasting were appointed to manage all the BBC's production in their region: national, regional and local. Previously the three Network Production Centres in Manchester, Birmingham and Bristol had produced programmes to be shown across the BBC and the eight 'island sites' had produced programmes to be shown in the region. Now all regions

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<sup>192</sup> 'The knives are out at the BBC', *The Guardian*, 6 February 1980. See also 'BBC chief warns that jobs may go', *The Observer*, 27 January 1980.

<sup>193</sup> 'New radio stations may be killed off', *The Guardian*, 17 February 1980.

<sup>194</sup> 'BBC economy cuts end regional news and weather on radio', *The Guardian*, 27 August 1980.

<sup>195</sup> 'BBC's first county radio is now on the air', *The Guardian*, 12 September 1980.

<sup>196</sup> BBC, *BBC Annual Report and Handbook 1987* (London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1986), 1, 2, 188, 251; 'BBC aims to axe 4,000 jobs in £30m switch', *The Guardian*, 18 July 1985.

would produce network TV and radio programmes.<sup>197</sup> The North Region based in Leeds and the North East Region in Newcastle, together with six BBC local radio stations,<sup>198</sup> now formed a new ‘North East’ Region with headquarters in Leeds, although regional and network programmes would be made in both TV centres.<sup>199</sup> Presented as a means of providing ‘a greater degree of regional authority’, the number of weekly opt-out programmes was actually reduced to help fund programmes produced for the network.<sup>200</sup>

It was claimed that this new structure would benefit both audiences and staff: ‘The decision to re-organise and to bring together in a more co-ordinated way all those broadcasters working within defined territories, saw benefits for the audience as well as for the staff, whose career development and programme-making opportunities would be enhanced.’<sup>201</sup> While these opportunities were certainly welcomed by many in Leeds and Newcastle, they were to be short-lived and it is doubtful that the regional boundaries were any clearer to audiences than they had been before – Lincolnshire still received *Look North* from Leeds. (see Figure 8). According to Garth Jeffery, manager for Programme Resources and Engineering: ‘Part of the North East region brief we were trying to do was to get network programming out of the regional centres. In particular Leeds was doing documentaries and special features for the network and Newcastle was encouraged to do network for children, and that’s how *Byker Grove* started’.<sup>202</sup> But it was never an easy alliance:

Leeds always felt itself to be the strongest centre and in news terms it probably was... Yorkshire was big, it had a huge industrial complex whereas Newcastle was slightly less dominant in these terms so it was a strange mix and also there was a huge issue over what the North East was because Leeds had been BBC North whereas Newcastle was the North East and I can remember a big row over whether the big revolving ident should be BBC North or North East. In the end it

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<sup>197</sup> *BBC Annual Report and Handbook 1987*, 40.

<sup>198</sup> The five Yorkshire radio stations and Radio Newcastle

<sup>199</sup> Although the 1987 *Handbook* lists Newcastle as the regional HQ, the Head of Broadcasting and his team were based in Leeds where a building was adapted for their use.

<sup>200</sup> *Ibid.*, 40-41. The Board of Mangement had intended that regional feature slots should be reduced to thirty a year but, after representation from the Regional Advisory Councils, forty were retained. See Appendix Three for the number of programmes produced each year

<sup>201</sup> *BBC Annual Report and Handbook 1987*, 41.

<sup>202</sup> Garth Jeffery, interview with author, Longframlington, Northumberland, 30 April 2012.

was forced through that it was the North East and people in Leeds and Yorkshire were not very happy. I expect at the end of the day that's why the region had some difficulties.<sup>203</sup>

As new BBC premises were being built in the city, Newcastle might well have expected to become the centre for the new region, but Bill Greaves, Regional Television Manager in Leeds, had been appointed Head of Broadcasting for the new region. Mike Robertson, who got the job of planning manager, believes this created a problem:

Wherever the management was, the other centre felt disadvantaged. Even so, there were better technical facilities in Newcastle so they assumed the team would be there but the team appointed was of people in the Leeds area who wanted to stay in Leeds and in the sense it became two regions rather than one.<sup>204</sup>

Greaves looks back at his time as the North East's Head of Broadcasting as the most frustrating point in his BBC career. Previously, as Regional Television Manager he had the freedom to use his budget 'most effectively' by not filling posts and putting as much of it as he could into production, but this was no longer the case and he felt it was becoming increasingly difficult to make programmes.<sup>205</sup>

Certainly Jeffery found that the bargaining process necessary to obtain resources was both 'convoluted and complex'. The BBC was more sympathetic to requests for equipment from Newcastle because of the commitment to children's television, even to the extent of investing in a new building for *Byker Grove*, but film editing facilities in Leeds were upgraded to facilitate the making of hoped-for major documentary series.<sup>206</sup> Robertson recalls: 'For two years it was good fun but unfortunately the managers within the BBC had decided that having five regions was far too expensive.'<sup>207</sup> For Head of Broadcasting Bill Greaves, the biggest change came with Margaret Thatcher's dismissal of D-G Alisdair Milne in January 1987, the succession of 'accountant Mike Checkland' and the arrival of John Birt as Deputy D-G: 'That I think was the

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<sup>203</sup> Ibid.

<sup>204</sup> Mike Robertson, interview with author, Huddersfield, 29 May 2012.

<sup>205</sup> Greaves, interview.

<sup>206</sup> Jeffery, interview.

<sup>207</sup> Robertson, interview.



end of the glorious creative BBC because I think it was so obsessed with organisation that it led inevitably to two things: it led to a growth in management and management posts and it led to a decline in creativity and it led to big salaries.<sup>208</sup> By August 1989 Greaves had gone, to be replaced by John Shearer.<sup>209</sup> Robertson remembers returning from holiday and finding a different management team in place.<sup>210</sup> And Jeffery comments:

It was very clear when John Shearer came in that things were going to change. Now I think the cynics amongst us felt that John Shearer had been put in to wind it all up... He would probably deny that if you spoke to him... Certainly the last part of 1989-1990... was really quite hard work and we'd lost Bill, and Bill was a real flagship, certainly for Leeds, and then for the North East, and he tried very hard to defend it, but in the end the writing was on the wall.<sup>211</sup>

When Shearer arrived in Leeds it was not immediately clear that the North East's network production days were numbered. By December 1989 he had certainly made changes to his management team - Mark Byford, who had begun his BBC career in Leeds, became Head of the Leeds Centre - but Shearer told the *Yorkshire Post* that he had 'set the Woodhouse Lane centre's ambitions at the most difficult and competitive area of specialisation in the BBC TV set up - making major documentary series for the BBC-1 and BBC-2 networks'. A series celebrating Britishness was at the planning stage. But working methods would have to change: 'We have decided to manage local radio and local television together to make more sensible use of our resources.' In future, regional and local news would be bi-media, with local radio reporters providing voice-overs for TV whose reporters would supply items to local radio stations who themselves would provide a useful newsgathering service.<sup>212</sup> Jean Seaton has described the period between the Peacock Report and *Extending Choice* as a time when the 'BBC ducked and weaved in every way it could, using reform both as an expedient political face saver, and sometimes as a real agent of necessary change'.<sup>213</sup> And Shearer, commenting on Peacock's

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<sup>208</sup> Greaves, interview.

<sup>209</sup> Shearer was previously Head of Television, BBC South and West.

<sup>210</sup> Robertson, interview

<sup>211</sup> Jeffery, interview.

<sup>212</sup> 'A revolution at the BBC', *Yorkshire Post* 20 December 1989

<sup>213</sup> Curran and Seaton, *Power Without Responsibility*, 2010, 209

recommendation that ITV franchises should be auctioned, predicted that company take-overs could lead to an abandoning of local news and current affairs. He reiterated that, as far as the BBC region was concerned, his job was to ‘ensure that news and current affairs is done right’.<sup>214</sup> In 1990 BBC North East merged with BBC North West Region to create BBC North with regional headquarters in Manchester, much as it had been before 1970. Regional opt-outs would now be news-based as would local radio, and it seemed unlikely that any programmes made for first-showing on the network would be produced in Leeds. In Mike Robertson’s words: ‘We were told this wasn’t our business, that we should be making news programmes...’<sup>215</sup> And, while this might have made sense in terms of the BBC’s survival, for many of those interviewed for this study this was the end of the golden age of regional broadcasting.

## Conclusion

This chapter has shown that the history of the BBC in the Yorkshire region between 1945 and 1990 was not simply one of continuing expansion and development. As a national broadcaster the BBC was aware of the need to reflect regional diversity but its frequent regional restructurings suggest there was little idea of what constituted a region. As television expanded in the 1960s it became obvious that the Corporation’s newsgathering east of the Pennines was inadequate but resources were only made available to meet this need as a result of competition when it became clear that YTV would start broadcasting from Leeds in 1968. While transmitters determined that both broadcasters covered the same area, only the independent company clearly identified with Yorkshire as a region by including it in its name.

While the purpose here is to provide the chronological context for this study, the impact of this narrative on BBC activities in Yorkshire has been explored together with the way staff responded to change. At the beginning of this period programmes made for the region were

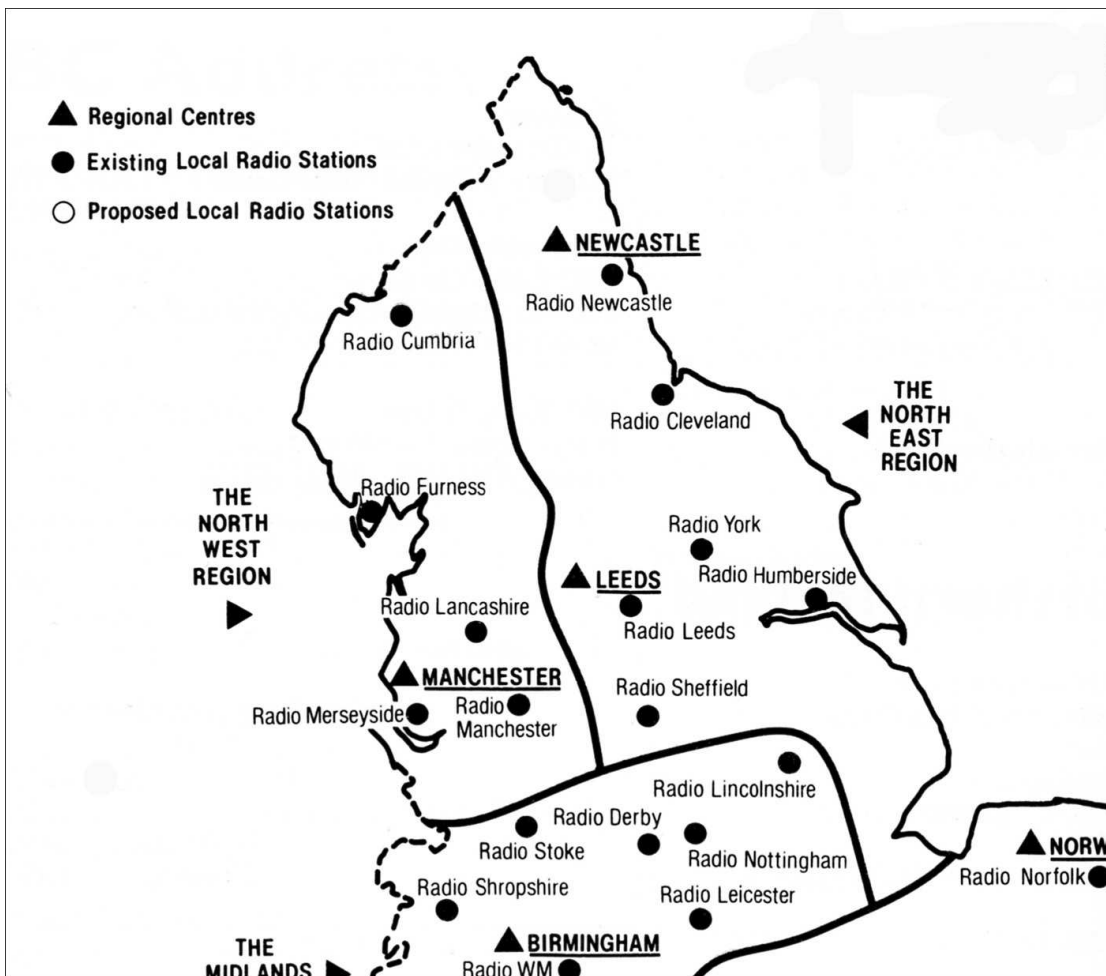
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<sup>214</sup> ‘A revolution at the BBC’, *Yorkshire Post* 20 December 1989

<sup>215</sup> Robertson, interview.

transmitted on the BBC Home Service but in the early 1970s the responsibility for making regional programmes moved to television. In its description of the experiences of both the North Region Radio Drama Department and Leeds television staff this chapter has suggested that the relationship between region and nation was continually being renegotiated, not only by the BBC as an organisation but also by the staff themselves. During this period local broadcasting became more than just a possibility, but financial and political constraints meant that the idea of BBC 'city' stations soon had to be abandoned, raising the question of 'how local was local'? It is suggested that this was a time when regional production staff enjoyed considerable creative freedom although this was perceived to come to an end in the late 1980s. But BBC regional television and local radio also came together for the first time, resulting in a 'cluster' of Yorkshire local radio stations as well as the TV station, all managed from Leeds. Following another restructuring in 1996 BBC North was once again divided and the 'cluster' became a region although it was not given the name of Yorkshire until 2004.

Figure 7: Map showing the BBC's North East Region, 1986 (Source: *BBC Handbook 1987*)<sup>216</sup>



<sup>216</sup> *BBC Handbook 1987*, 192

## PART TWO: CASE STUDIES

### Chapter Three: ‘A reliable witness’ – television news from Leeds

I think the greatest thing you could say about BBC North was that it was a reliable witness and that I think is as much as I can claim for it.<sup>1</sup>



**Figure 8:** Headline, first edition of *Look North* from Leeds spoken by Eddie Waring (left):

‘There are more acres in Yorkshire than there are letters in the Bible. There are three million, eighty-seven thousand and a few more, and I’m on Middleham Moor...’

Source: still frame from *Look North*, 25 March 1968.

#### Introduction

Marking the twenty-fifth anniversary of BBC Leeds’ regional news magazine *Look North* in 1993, the then Controller of English Regions, Mark Byford, who began his BBC career as a ‘holiday relief assistant’ in 1979, wrote: ‘I remember saying on the day I returned [as Head of Centre] that in a highly volatile ever changing broadcasting environment, the one thing that will always be there at BBC Leeds will be *Look North*. It’s the most important programme of them all, the most precious...the flagship in every sense’.<sup>2</sup> This chapter will focus on what Pat

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<sup>1</sup> Greaves, interview.

<sup>2</sup> Contribution by Mark Byford to *Talented, Difficult, Cussed, Lovely, People*, 52.

Loughrey has called ‘the trajectory of regional television news’<sup>3</sup>. Asked what were the most significant stories covered by *Look North* during his years in charge of the BBC region (as Area News Editor, then Regional Television Manager and finally Head of the North East Region), Bill Greaves refers to the Flixborough Disaster in 1974, the 1984-1985 Miners’ Strike – ‘a huge event of great political significance and, when you look back, it seems like an even greater event’ - and the hunt for the Yorkshire Ripper. But, more than anything else, he believes it was industry that ‘defined the common perception of the area’: ‘I think the region is a newsworthy region. There is no question about that...But, of course, we also chronicled the decline of the major industries. When I first came up here there was steel, coal, fishing, textiles and engineering.’<sup>4</sup> The intention in this chapter is to look at the content of *Look North* between 1968 until 1990 using the perspective of those involved in its production as the starting-point, and to consider to what extent the programme developed a distinctive regional narrative.

However, first it is necessary to consider how working practices at the BBC in Leeds have affected the availability of the archive and the way it can now be used by researchers. Until the mid-1980s film was the medium used for location reporting and, for reasons of both speed and economy, on its return to the station the film was put through the processing bath, and then edited and transmitted and consequently, as far as news coverage was concerned, it was the camera-original film<sup>5</sup> that went into the station’s film library to be used in subsequent stories. This means that a significant amount of footage is missing from the cans containing transmitted *Look North* film items covering the years 1972 to 1985 that are accessible to researchers at the Yorkshire Film Archive. Less accessible to researchers are the surviving film cans from 1968 to

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<sup>3</sup> Pat Loughrey, (Director, Nations and Regions) ‘News of the Future’, *Made in the UK*. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/aboutthebbc/insidethebbc/howwework/reports/madeintheuk.html?lang=cy>, accessed 2009 but in November 2013 it was no longer possible to access the *Made in the UK* essays on the BBC website.

<sup>4</sup> Greaves, interview.

<sup>5</sup> At first 16mm black-and-white negative film was used and usually only seen in positive form when converted by the telecine machine during transmission; this had been replaced by 1974 with 16mm reversal film which produced a positive image when processed.

1972 deposited with the BBC Television Archive<sup>6</sup> prior to the arrangement reached with the YFA. In addition, film stories went out as part of a live programme and the commentary was most frequently voiced during transmission. And, with no scripts available, it is only possible to obtain the occasional glimpse of what was contained in the links and studio items. The recording of programmes onto VHS for reference purposes only began during the miners' strike in 1984 and, while these cassettes have been made available to this researcher, the sequence is far from complete. It quickly became apparent during the fieldwork that it would not be possible to replicate for the BBC Yorkshire TV region the detailed research carried out by Frances Eames who, in comparing ITN's national coverage of the 1972 Ugandan Asian crisis with that of ATV (the ITV company then serving the Midlands), was able to identify two different and conflicting narratives.<sup>7</sup> But the database put together by BBC staff to enable film to be retrieved from the YFA when required for production purposes has made it possible to reflect on what was actually filmed rather than on what has survived. In addition, even when the film is no longer there, many of the film cans still contain the original paper 'running order' for the programme listing all its components and timings. For the period before regular PasB (programme-as-broadcast) recordings were made, the running order was the only indication of the proportion of a programme that was devoted to each item.

This chapter first considers how the programme was invented in 1968 and the problems faced by the fledgling news station before going on to discuss the extent to which former *Look North* journalists and production staff believe that the region was defined by its industry in the period covered by this study. It then goes on to consider the narrative provided by the major 'hard news' stories before looking at how the lighter items were used in the programme. To an extent the region's 'story', as it appeared in *Look North*, was told by three items transmitted in March 1993 to mark the programme's twenty-fifth anniversary. Regional disasters, murders, strikes,

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<sup>6</sup> Now the BBC Archive Centre at Perivale.

<sup>7</sup> Frances Eames, 'ITV and the 1972 Ugandan Migration', *Media History*, 154 (2009) 4, 453-469.

electioneering and war are shown alongside sporting highlights, personal achievements and cultural activity, ending in a celebratory montage, and are described in Appendix Two. Selected and produced by John Irwin,<sup>8</sup> a former BBC Leeds regional journalist, they are just as much a personal view as the interviews and collections of reminiscences on which this study primarily draws.

Very few of the stories and the events considered here were exclusive to *Look North*. Many of the ideas that were followed up by BBC journalists in Leeds had their origins in the regional and local press. In his 1989 study, *News in the Regions*, Alastair Hetherington noted that the news priorities at YTV's *Calendar* were much the same as those in the BBC Leeds newsroom.<sup>9</sup> However, there was an awareness amongst BBC Leeds staff that while they themselves might be part of the nation's biggest broadcasting organization, in Yorkshire they were the minor player. Speaking in Leeds in 2008, the BBC's Deputy D-G Mark Byford said: 'In 1979 when I joined *Look North*, the market leader for regional television news was Yorkshire Television's *Calendar*. It was well ahead in terms of audience share against Look North.'<sup>10</sup> According to *Look North* cameraman Dave Brierley, 'everybody pulled together because it was a pioneering kind of thing, but initially everybody watched YTV, and not a great deal watched the BBC'. He recalled how, when out on a story, he would sometimes meet YTV reporter/presenter Richard Whiteley who would always joke, 'Hello, Dave. Wasting your bloody time again?'<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> When Mark Byford returned to Leeds in 1990 he asked John Irwin to come back to the BBC on an occasional freelance basis to prepare a series of obituaries beginning with four significant 'Yorkshiremen': Harold Wilson, Len Hutton, Arthur Scargill and Jimmy Savile. The author worked as researcher on the obituaries and on the anniversary compilations. John Irwin died in 2004.

<sup>9</sup> Hetherington, *News in the Regions*, 19. The observations took place between 21 and 27 January, 1988.

<sup>10</sup> Mark Byford, 'News at When? – Broadcast Journalism in the Digital Age', 5. Speech given at the University, 4 March 2008, accessed 18 December 2013, [http://www.bbc.co.uk/mediacentre/speeches/2008/byford\\_mark.html](http://www.bbc.co.uk/mediacentre/speeches/2008/byford_mark.html)

<sup>11</sup> *The Men and their Movie Cameras* [DVD]



## Getting started

In what was his first television broadcast, reporter David Seymour introduced the first edition of *Look North*, not from the BBC Leeds studio as had been planned but from a rowing boat.<sup>12</sup> Much depended on this first programme - BBC chairman Lord Hill was in Leeds to officially launch the programme and various dignitaries had been invited from both the city and the region - but as editor Bill Greaves comments: 'God smiled upon us and created a flood in York.'<sup>13</sup> Nature had given him what was to become a staple element of both regional and local broadcasting, the bad weather story.



**Figure 9:** David Seymour in York introduces the first *Look North* 'from our new Leeds studio'.

(Source: Still frame, *Look North* 25 March 1968)

The BBC's decision to launch a new regional TV news magazine had been taken because of the imminent arrival of YTV, but it was also assumed that this would give the BBC the opportunity to improve its newsgathering operation in the North of England, both for television and radio news, as BBC Northern Editor, John Tisdall, explained to Donald Edwards, General Manager for Local Radio Development, in July 1967:

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<sup>12</sup> *Look North*, 25 March 1968.

<sup>13</sup> Greaves, interview.

The plans for our area development at Leeds include a news intake from Yorkshire and Lincolnshire to the Leeds newsroom for radio and television purposes, although the regional radio bulletin output will remain in Manchester. The Area News Editor at Leeds, I believe, must have direct control over news sources, including correspondents...I want to avoid asking correspondents to telephone anywhere but Leeds.<sup>14</sup>

Having, defined the 'area' as all of Yorkshire and Lincolnshire, Tisdall went on to prioritize Leeds itself: 'Within the Leeds locality we are so indifferently served at present that it would be one of the first tasks of the Area News Editor when he arrives at the end of the year to establish a good city coverage.'<sup>15</sup>

Although by 1967 the BBC was using freelancers in the Leeds office to augment its news coverage, Leeds-based staff reporter John Burns had been reporting on news stories across the North of England for both radio and TV, and for both the Leeds and Manchester newsrooms, since 1961. However, Burns' relationship with the Manchester newsroom could not always be described as harmonious. In 1964 he wrote to the Assistant News Editor complaining about the 'lack of interest' in material from 'this vast area East of the Pennines', pointing out that seven Yorkshire and Lincolnshire film items were still waiting to be transmitted and subsequently two of these had already been featured nationally on the *Tonight* programme.<sup>16</sup> And yet, taken together, Tisdall's emphasis on Leeds and Burns' complaint about a lack of geographical balance indicate what was to be a perennial problem for regional broadcasters. In 1964 Burns had suggested that it should be 'made a rule' that *Look North* would transmit daily '(say) five minutes' from Yorkshire and Lincolnshire, but as time went on the Leeds *Look North* was faced by the same dilemma. In 2001 the BBC Hull studio began to opt-out of *Look North* for a short period each evening and was given its own programme in the following year.<sup>17</sup>

It may be significant that when newly-appointed 'Area News Editor' Bill Greaves made his first visit to Leeds in 1967 he was accompanied, not by anyone from Manchester, but by the

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<sup>14</sup> Northern Editor to General Manager, Local Radio News, memorandum, 24 July 1967 'News: North Region, Leeds: 1960-1970', WAC R28/646/1

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> John Burns, Leeds to Assistant News Editor [North], 4 November 1964, WAC R28/646/1

<sup>17</sup> Colin Philpott, interview with author, Bradford, 11 March 2010.

editor of BBC Television News, Peter Woon,<sup>18</sup> suggesting that the new Leeds operation was seen more as a satellite of Television News rather than of the BBC's North Region in Manchester. Film cameraman Dave Brierley had been sent from Manchester to Leeds to work with John Burns and believes that, in the five years before *Look North* was launched, he was supplying material to BBC Television News in London on a daily basis. He remembers having to stay in Hull for three weeks in February 1968 when three trawlers went missing: 'It gave you a feeling you were in with the top stories.'<sup>19</sup> Just a few weeks later he was filming the York floods, the lead item for the first *Look North* from Leeds as well as for BBC News. Marking the programme's first anniversary, Mike Alder, then Head of Regional TV Development, outlined what he believed were the two main responsibilities of the 'BBC's northern newsrooms':

One is to the national network, in radio and in television, to keep abreast of the political, industrial and economic developments in the region, to report and film the accidents and disasters, and to reflect the affairs of ordinary people's lives which suddenly put them into the headlines and onto the nation's television screens.

The other is to produce "Look North" and here there's an opportunity to take a little more time, to look at affairs at the more local level or from the area point of view. There'll be questions and discussion, argument and confrontation as well as the unusual or distinctly off-beat.<sup>20</sup>

One of the main purposes of Bill Greaves and Peter Woon's visit to Leeds was to meet and recruit freelancers to work for the new programme. Greaves decided he wanted a very different style of presentation from that used in Manchester where much reliance was placed on the 'overwhelming personality' of Stuart Hall. Instead, he says, 'I wanted to make reporters the personalities, but more than that they had to be reporters and they had to be experienced' but Greaves felt that he was taking a risk as Hall would be missed by the viewers.<sup>21</sup> Stories introduced in the studio were mediated through the presenter and the way presenters were deployed became part of how the story was told.

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<sup>18</sup> Greaves, interview

<sup>19</sup> *The Men and their Movie Cameras* [DVD]

<sup>20</sup> Mike Alder, nd. 'Leeds: Area Television Development', WAC N25/38/1

<sup>21</sup> Greaves, interview.

To ensure that everything would run smoothly, film items for the first night's edition had been put together beforehand although some of this material had to be dropped from the programme because of the York floods. According to film editor Edward Croot: 'In the run up to starting, all our new reporters were sent out to do stories. They all had to do their version of the Aimè le Prince story.'<sup>22</sup> The 'le Prince story' alludes to an item entitled 'Leeds, TV City' which, in its transmitted form, began with reporter James Hogg speaking to camera from the Biophysics Department at the University of Leeds where John Logie Baird had experimented in transmitting pictures and also included an interview with the BBC's Chief Engineer T.H. Bridgewater as well as showing the site for the new TV studios next to the original BBC building in Woodhouse Lane. The workshop of cinematography pioneer Louis Aimè Augustin Le Prince had, at one time, occupied the site for the new studio.<sup>23</sup> It was only fitting then that Leeds should become a 'TV City'.

A report by Eddie Waring from a racing stable in North Yorkshire had no obvious news 'peg',<sup>24</sup> but its headline sequence with Waring, standing on the Middleham Moor gallops, referring to Yorkshire's vast acres,<sup>25</sup> was an obvious appeal to the new regional audience. Bill Greaves comments that Waring had wanted to work with them from the beginning and 'he was a Yorkshire face'.<sup>26</sup> He would have been instantly recognisable to many viewers as 'the voice of rugby league' having appeared as the regular commentator on the sport for *Grandstand* from 1958, and for *Look North* in Manchester prior to the launch of *Look North* in Leeds.<sup>27</sup> According to his biographer, Waring was 'invited to become "journalistically involved" in a Friday-night sports slot by the producer of the new Leeds-based *Look North* in January 1968... Soon, he was a

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<sup>22</sup> Edward Croot, interview with author, Selby, 26 January 2011.

<sup>23</sup> A commemorative plaque on the building unveiled by Sir Richard Attenborough in 1988 read: 'The pioneer of cinematography had a workshop on this site where he invented a one-lens camera and a projecting machine. Le Prince produced what are believed to be the world's first moving pictures taken on Leeds Bridge in 1888.'

<sup>24</sup> That element of the story which makes it relevant to the present time.

<sup>25</sup> See above, 100.

<sup>26</sup> Greaves, interview.

<sup>27</sup> Tony Hannan, *Being Eddie Waring: The Life and Times of a Sporting Icon* (Edinburgh: Mainstream Publishing Company, 1958) 161, 185.

regular presence on other days of the week too, particularly Saturday...<sup>28</sup> As sports historian Jack Williams comments: ‘At a time when it was accepted that most broadcasters should have a ‘BBC accent’, Waring was one of the first, if not the first, sports commentator to broadcast nationally in an unmistakable Yorkshire accent’.<sup>29</sup>

Perhaps the publicity leaflet produced to accompany the launch of *Look North* was slightly misleading when it claimed: ‘LOOK NORTH comes to Leeds as Yorkshire’s first-ever nightly news magazine – another milestone in the BBC’s service to broadcasting east of the Pennines’. After all, Yorkshire viewers had been able to watch regional TV news magazines produced in Manchester for more than a decade. Would much of the news be ‘just as interesting to Grimsby and Lincoln as in Almondbury and Appleton Roebuck’ as the leaflet claimed? Indeed, as Yorkshire was the only county mentioned, should viewers assume that it now included Grimsby and Lincoln?<sup>30</sup> Speaking on a TV programme made as part of a series marking the BBC’s departure from its Woodhouse Lane studios, David Seymour also stressed the novelty of *Look North* from Leeds: ‘This was the first time ordinary people were able to broadcast on TV, and for the audience itself to really see neighbours, ordinary people like themselves talking about their experiences. This was new and at the time it was completely enthralling.’<sup>31</sup> Although Martin Noble, Senior News Assistant and later Assistant News Editor, who arrived in Leeds from the BBC Manchester newsroom, agrees that ‘it was new to everybody, we didn’t know what was going to happen, whether it would work or not’, he dismisses the suggestion that they were inventing a new form of television: ‘There were basic BBC Television News rules and regulations, and we accepted these and adopted these.’<sup>32</sup> According to cameraman David Brierley, these rules extended to how the stories were filmed: ‘This was laid down in stone at the

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 183

<sup>29</sup> Jack Williams, ‘Up and Under’, *The Sports Historian* 22 (2002) 1, 119. See also Russell, *Looking North*, 260.

<sup>30</sup> ‘Look North now east of the Pennines’, BBC publicity leaflet, nd, WAC N25/38/1

<sup>31</sup> *The Look North Years: 1968*, BNT Productions, BBC4, 2004. The production team had all worked for BBC TV in Leeds prior to forming their own independent company.

<sup>32</sup> Martin Noble, interview with author, Huddersfield, 2 February 2010

time at the Beeb. You did question; answer; question on a two-shot; cut; changed your lens; repeated the question and continued the interview.’<sup>33</sup>

For the handful of reporters and journalists working in the BBC Leeds newsroom, covering an editorial area that stretched from Whitby to the Wash was a logistical challenge. Reporter John Burns observes that when regional broadcasting started, they wondered where they were going to get their stories and relied to a significant extent on what was in the newspapers.<sup>34</sup> And not all of those involved in the newsgathering process worked for the BBC. Martin Noble comments: ‘It was a very big area but we had a network of correspondents and some of them were very, very good...John Pick of York, he was excellent. There was Jim Goodrigg at Hull, and also a good cameraman at both York and Hull. There was also a very good service of freelancers throughout the region...that fed us in Manchester. You see we just asked them to feed us in Leeds’.<sup>35</sup>

At first, getting stories did prove to be difficult as Bill Greaves confirms: ‘The thing about news is that there is never enough of it for television as the new vogue for twenty-four hour news indicates. There’s about five minutes of news a day except on exceptional days.’ But, for studio and film director Doug Smith, this had its advantages, providing him with opportunities to make five or ten minute items on subjects from gardening to architecture.<sup>36</sup> For Greaves the ‘correct mix’ in a programme was obtained by surrounding the ‘hard news’ stories with features that were both ‘interesting and topical’,<sup>37</sup> and John Burns remembers that good ideas were always well received. However, it was only a matter of weeks before one of these ‘ideas’ resulted in a formal complaint to the BBC and the offending item, which featured shots of the town of Batley accompanied only by the sound of Louis Armstrong’s recent hit ‘A Wonderful World’ was transmitted on the day it was announced that Armstrong was booked to appear at the Batley Variety Club. But, in focusing on what appeared to be an empty and derelict post-industrial

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<sup>33</sup> *The Men and their Movie Cameras* [DVD]

<sup>34</sup> Burns, interview. The author remembers the *Yorkshire Post* being referred to as the ‘daily prospects’.

<sup>35</sup> Noble, interview.

<sup>36</sup> Doug Smith, interview, Ilkley, 19 July 2011.

<sup>37</sup> Greaves, interview.

landscape,<sup>38</sup> was the cameraman just recording what he saw, or was the BBC ‘poking fun at the town’ as the Mayor believed,<sup>39</sup> or was the Batley story an example of ‘mickey-taking’ as was suggested by one contributor to this study?<sup>40</sup> The question of place-image and the ‘stigmatisation’ of place by broadcasters is discussed in Chapter Five in reference to Bradford<sup>41</sup> but it is possible to read the Batley film differently: the shots of daffodils, of babies and friends happily chatting were edited to match the lyrics of ‘A Wonderful World’. And the response appearing in the *Batley News*, the town’s weekly newspaper suggested there was little support for the council’s point of view; an editorial concluded almost gleefully: ‘Putting this matter into its right perspective, Mr William Greaves, BBC TV area news editor, says that quite a number of Batley people phoned their congratulations on the item.’<sup>42</sup> And the Chairman of the local Trades Council was reported as being pleased that the town was being shown on television because the scenes used were ‘real’: ‘They are part of Batley, part of the history of the town and its people together with its industrial past and present. Real places, real folk with a richness of their own that can both be painted and a story told.’<sup>43</sup>



**Figure 10:** *Look North*’s film portrait of Batley in April 1968, cut to Louis Armstrong’s hit song, ‘What a Wonderful World’  
(Source: still frames, *Look North*, April 1968, retransmitted on *Look North* on 26 March 1993)

<sup>38</sup> The only version of this item available to the author at the time of writing

<sup>39</sup> ‘B.B.C. film of “ugly Batley” angers councillors’, *Batley News and Reporter*, 26 April 1968.

<sup>40</sup> *A Celebration of 25 Years of Television Broadcasting by the BBC in Leeds*, 1993.

<sup>41</sup> See Rob Shields, *Places on the Margin: Alternative Geographies of Modernity*, 60.

<sup>42</sup> ‘Injured pride’, *Batley News and Reporter*, 26 April 1968.

<sup>43</sup> ‘Batley man hits out at old TV films’, *Batley News and Reporter*, 5 July 1968. He was complaining that the BBC was too content to show old feature films rather than programmes about ‘real places’.

While *Look North* may have presented the opportunity to bring the ‘experience’ of ‘ordinary people’ to the screen as David Seymour suggests, this ‘experience’ would have been filtered by the camera crews, film editors, journalists, producers and presenters, all of whom played their part in determining how it would appear on the screen. At the time the Batley film was transmitted, Jim Graham was Assistant Area News Editor, taking charge of the newsroom. His later roles - as BBC Regional Television Manager in Newcastle, then in the BBC Secretariat before returning to Border Television as Managing-Director and later Chairman - have meant that Graham has thought a great deal about the role of regional television and has some advice for regional journalists: ‘Always try to look ahead as to where you are going, but you are privileged to be an observer who can do something. You can make programmes, you can build pride and that’s a heck of a responsibility and must not be treated lightly’.<sup>44</sup>

## **The industrial region**

As has been shown, for regional manager Bill Greaves the ‘common perception’ of the region was most clearly defined in terms of its industry, and this has generally been the view of those working as reporters who have contributed to this study. David Seymour, while also referring to the importance of local government, believes that the ‘regional connecting rods’, ‘much stronger than they are now’, were then the region’s main industries – steel, coal and textiles – but that the ‘connecting rods’ extended beyond these characteristic industries to all the other businesses that depended on them, and in this way ‘a very strong Yorkshire regional identity’ was cemented.<sup>45</sup> Judith Stamper, who came from *Newsnight* to work at the BBC in Leeds, believes that Yorkshire was the right place to be at the time for reporters who were interested in industry and politics:

I remember going up and vox popping shifts at four o’clock in the morning and doing packages with these people, going into their homes, finding out what the inside story was, through to making documentaries about them. You could do that within the same region, covering for news

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<sup>44</sup> Jim Graham, interview with author, Preston, 17 May 2011.

<sup>45</sup> Seymour, interview.



the steel strike, followed by the miners' strike and the pitched battles in the South Yorkshire coalfield, and reporting on engineering closures, [and] the decimation of the fleet in Hull and Grimsby.<sup>46</sup>

Certainly after the election of the Thatcher government in May 1979, the Yorkshire region was seen as playing a central role in the major national stories of the day, and for *Look North* journalists the national story of rising unemployment<sup>47</sup> was manifested in factory closures at a local level. Speaking on BBC Radio Leeds in 2011 Mark Byford 'from Castleford' recalled that an idea to devote an edition of *Look North* to unemployment came from one of the BBC's canteen workers: 'Unemployment was really starting to rise, 1980 to 1981, and...Margaret here in the BBC at Leeds said "the trouble with you is you keep giving different job losses every day but you've never put them together and given a total".'<sup>48</sup> The programme was planned to coincide with a visit by Employment Secretary Jim Prior to a West Yorkshire textile mill but a *Look North* film crew was outside the Hotpoint factory in Mexborough, South Yorkshire to catch workers leaving the factory after job losses were announced: 'It was a family where the father, mother and daughter were made redundant on the same day within an hour, and none of them knew if the other had, and we captured it as they found out'.<sup>49</sup> Explaining what this report meant to him, Byford told listeners: 'I remember it because at the end of the day it is about people, particularly at a local level, the impact and experience and that really hit me on that day and stayed with me.'<sup>50</sup>

The experience of the Young family of Mexborough was one of several longer-than-average items co-produced by Mark Byford and reporter Mike Smartt. Their 1981 report on the boardroom battle at Bradford-based Illingworth Morris, then the world's largest wool textile group, might not have been viewed at the time as being such a human-interest story although it

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<sup>46</sup> Judith Stamper, interview with author, Leeds, 22 February 2011.

<sup>47</sup> The annual average unemployment rate rose from 5.7% in 1979 to 13% in 1982. Source: Denman, James and McDonald, Paul, 'Unemployment Statistics from 1881 to the Present Day' *Labour Market Trends*, January 1996, 6.

<sup>48</sup> *One On One: Liz Green with Mark Byford*, BBC Radio Leeds, 3 February 2011.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*; *Look North: 3176*, 11 July 1980, BBC Leeds database, YFA; see also 'The human faces of a recession', Today, 23 January 2009, accessed 30 November 2013,

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/today/hi/today/newsid\\_7846000/7846451.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/today/hi/today/newsid_7846000/7846451.stm)

<sup>50</sup> *One On One: Liz Green with Mark Byford*

included an interview with an employee.<sup>51</sup> Much of the media interest centred on the principal shareholder, the former wife of the Huddersfield-born film actor James Mason, but that this was a story that needed to be explained to regional viewers was shown when the iconic Salts Mill was closed by the company less than five years later. *Look North* went on to report on the new uses to which the mill was put, just as in 1980 it had reported on the mass picketing at Hadfields steelworks in Sheffield, the closure of the works in 1983 and the opening of the vast Meadowhall shopping complex on the Hadfields site in 1990.<sup>52</sup>

Looking back, reporter Judith Stamper commented: 'I liked to be there at the heart of the stories because I knew history was breaking around us.'<sup>53</sup> The 1984-1985 miners' strike began in Yorkshire on 5 March when the Yorkshire region of the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) called members out on strike in response to the announcement by the National Coal Board (NCB) that Cortonwood, a pit in the Barnsley area, would close; in its first item in what became *the* daily story, *Look North* reported from Yorkshire Main colliery near Doncaster interviewing a 'colliery deputy' who had been hit by a stone, followed by a studio interview with Jack Taylor, the General Secretary of the Yorkshire NUM.<sup>54</sup> The strike coincided with the point at which the region was moving from using film to cassette based electronic newsgathering (ENG) and until such time as the BBC TV News archive and the region's news tapes become more accessible to researchers, any attempt to contrast the BBC's regional and national narrative of the strike can be little more than suggestive. Certainly one of the most contentious elements in the BBC's reporting of the strike has been that surrounding the confrontation between

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<sup>51</sup> Mark Byford, *Talented, Difficult, Cussed, Lovely people*, 52; *Look North:3490*, BBC Leeds database, YFA, 2 October 1981.

<sup>52</sup> Clip from the *Look North* item, 4 September 1990, on the opening of Meadowhall, accessed 13 December 2013, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/local/sheffield/hi/people\\_and\\_places/newsid\\_8961000/8961600.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/local/sheffield/hi/people_and_places/newsid_8961000/8961600.stm)

<sup>53</sup> Stamper, interview.

<sup>54</sup> *Look North: 4111*, 5 March 1984, BBC Leeds database, YFA

thousands of police and thousands of pickets outside the British Steel Coking Plant at Orgreave, South Yorkshire on 18 June 1984.<sup>55</sup>

Journalists Francis Beckett and David Hencke in their account of the strike have provided a useful summary of the debate surrounding the editing of the story by BBC News:

At Orgreave the BBC, whether deliberately or not, gave the entirely false impression that police did no more than respond to violence from the miners. On 18 June, the *Nine O'Clock News* screened film showing mounted police charging a large group of striking miners, and a group of miners throwing stones at the police. But according to left-wing journalist Simon Pirani, 'by reversing the order, and showing the stone-throwing first, the editors of the programme gave the impression that the police charge had been provoked by violence from the mineworkers' side. This was the reverse of the truth.' The BBC claimed it was a mistake made in the 'haste of putting the news together'. Nicholas Jones, the BBC's then industrial correspondent, who has shown he is willing to challenge his old employers if he thinks they are wrong, insists: 'There was no BBC conspiracy to show the mineworkers in the worst possible light. If...shots of baton-wielding and picket line strikers were in the wrong order. I am convinced it was an entirely innocent mistake.'<sup>56</sup>

Historian Michael Bailey argues that the BBC was more culpable: 'That a public service broadcaster as revered as the BBC should commit such a dreadful error of editorial judgement still rankles and continues to haunt the corridors of Broadcasting House to this day.'<sup>57</sup> He points out that both ITN footage and police video evidence filmed on the day show the extent to which the BBC's reporting was misleading, suggesting that the edit fitted preconceptions about how the pickets were likely to have behaved.<sup>58</sup> Len Masterton, monitoring BBC output during the strike and writing while it was still continuing, was more concerned about the commentary, highlighting differences in the transcripts of the BBC's 5.40pm and 9pm network bulletins:

But even if no images of the riot police in action had been captured, what possible reason could there be for omitting any reference to the extraordinary scenes of police violence from the

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<sup>55</sup> There have been widely different estimates of the numbers of police and pickets present at what has gone down in history as 'the battle of Orgreave'. At the time the BBC estimated the numbers to be 6,500 pickets and 3,300 police (Source: News Information Television Centre, *Chronology of the Coal Dispute 1984-1985*, BBC Data, 1985) while recent figures quoted by the BBC are 10,000 miners and 5,000 police officers, "'Battle of Orgreave": Miners and police remember', *BBC News*, 14 November 2013, accessed 14 November 2013, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-24941194>

<sup>56</sup> Francis Beckett and David Hencke, *Marching to the Fault Line: The Miners' Strike and the Battle for Industrial Britain* (London: Constable, 2009), 99.

<sup>57</sup> Michael Bailey, 'Unfinished business: demythologising the battle of Orgreave' in Granville Williams (ed.) *Shafted: The Media, the Miners' Strike and the Aftermath* (London: Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom, 2009), 125

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid*, 125.

commentary? During the key 'riot police' sequence, the BBC commentary speaks, simply, of 'hand-to-hand' fighting and of 'horrific' attacks upon policemen only. That this account misleadingly distorted the events which actually took place was to be implicitly acknowledged, as we shall see, by changes made to this commentary by the main *BBC Nine O'Clock News* later the same evening.<sup>59</sup>

Both the item for the 5.40pm bulletin and *Look North* story were edited in Leeds but none of the contributors to this study were directly involved in putting together the Orgreave story.

The shotlist for the *Look North* story (catalogued in Leeds for library purposes) suggests that on 18 June the BBC had two crews at Orgreave, one using film and the other using ENG:

100 people injured in the miners' strike's worst clashes between pickets and police, outside Orgreave coking plant near Sheffield.

Film: s's columns of pickets arriving & long traffic tailback (0-22) PSC<sup>60</sup>: pickets surging towards police holding riot shields and police ranks parting to let mounted police charge through, pickets running at police on foot who use batons & riot shields (-1.55) mcs's arrested and bloody miners being taken away & injured policeman carried off (-1.05) Scargill using walkie talkie and police running forward (-1.24) ms ambulance [NUM President Arthur Scargill taken to hospital] - 1.30; police dragging off arrested miners (-1.38) Film: Var s's barricades erected by pickets – some on fire (-2.05) a/g s' coke lorries leaving Orgreave, police cordon, s barricades on fire (-2.22).<sup>61</sup>

As with the story in the 5.40pm national bulletin, here the pickets are described as moving forward before the police. The 9pm national bulletin also emphasized Arthur Scargill's injury and included interviews with Scargill in hospital, with Tony Clement, South Yorkshire Police's Assistant Chief Constable, explaining the 'police view'.<sup>62</sup> According to a letter to the *Guardian* from Simon Pirani, former editor of *The Miner*, the NUM's newspaper, the BBC's Martin Hart, on behalf of the D-G, 'acknowledged' that the sequences had been reversed; Hart is quoted as saying, 'It was a mistake made in the haste of putting the news together ... an editor inadvertently reversed the occurrence of the actions of the police and of the pickets'.<sup>63</sup> Another explanation is

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<sup>59</sup> Len Masterman, 'The Battle of Orgreave' in Len Masterman (ed.), *Mythologies: Stars, Shows and Signs* (London: Comedia/Routledge, 1984), 88-109 [107].

<sup>60</sup> Portable Single Camera: the term was used interchangeably with ENG.

<sup>61</sup> *Look North: 4185*, 18 June 1984, BBC Leeds database, YFA. The timings given are in minutes and seconds. See Glossary for shotlisting abbreviations.

<sup>62</sup> 'News: Miners Strike: Orgreave violence: Scargill in Hospital' 170/84/01EC, BBC News, 9pm bulletin, BBC1, 18 June 1984, accessed 17 November 2013, <https://www.bbcmotiongallery.com/gallery/clip/18859326.do>

<sup>63</sup> Letters, *Guardian*, 26 July 2007, accessed 17 November 2013, <http://www.theguardian.com/media/2007/jul/26/broadcasting>.

not that the shots were reversed but that the crew arrived too late to witness the initial action by the police against the pickets, and NUM picket Arthur Wakefield, who was at Orgreave on 18 June, reported in his diary: ‘Television cameramen had arrived and they were filming Arthur [Scargill] but I told them they should be filming the miner covered in blood as well.’<sup>64</sup> But for camera crews the consensus is that life was much safer behind the police lines. BBC reporter Nicholas Jones, who was not at Orgreave on 18 June 1984 but reported extensively on the strike, has commented:

But I do accept that a mistake was made, that the editing of the pictures was probably at fault. I have frequently been under great pressure in edit suites, often on location, and as the pictures are pasted in – the film was actually cut in those days – it is very easy to get confused, to put pictures in the wrong order; I have probably done it myself; chosen the first shot to hand just to get the report on air. Nowadays the pictures are time coded so there can be no excuse for getting it wrong. But the much more likely explanation about what happened at Orgreave...is that the BBC’s crews were predominantly positioned behind the police lines. The BBC’s crews weren’t welcome among the pickets; they did get a hostile reaction in the mining villages; sometimes they had to hang back, behind the police, for their own protection...In reality what happened at Orgreave and on other picket lines, was that many of the television crews were in effect “embedded” behind police lines.<sup>65</sup>

*Look North* cameraman Dave Brierley remembers pickets throwing bricks at his car during the strike, and keeping one of those bricks as a souvenir.<sup>66</sup>

Nicholas Jones has come to believe that during the strike there was ‘a collective failure of judgement’ by journalists:

For my own part, I admit I think I took it for granted that the Conservative Party did believe that coal had a future once the uneconomic pits had been closed. I certainly did not suspect that the Tories would force through a closure programme which would exceed even the direst predictions of the NUM President about the existence of a hidden ‘hit list’.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Elliott, Brian (ed.), *The Miners’ Strike Day by Day: The Illustrated Diary of Yorkshire Miner Arthur Wakefield*, (Barnsley: Wharncliffe Books, 2003), 62.

<sup>65</sup> Nicholas Jones, ‘An untold story? Fresh allegations about state manipulation in BBC’s reporting of miners’ strike’, speech at The Cube, Bristol, 1 June 2009, accessed 15 October 2013. <http://www.nicholasjones.org.uk/articles/40-trade-union-reporting/106-an-untold-story-fresh-allegations-about-state-manipulation-in-bbcs-reporting-of-miners-strike>

<sup>66</sup> *The Men and their Movie Cameras* [DVD]

<sup>67</sup> Jones, ‘An untold story?’, 2009

He believes there was too great a focus on the miners who returned to work during the strike ‘being bussed into the pits, braving the pickets’.<sup>68</sup> Certainly *Look North* did report on miners returning to work with the stories becoming more frequent in the last weeks of the strike, but it did sometimes provide time for stories not covered by BBC Television News. The Orgreave report in the programme for 18 June was followed on the same day by a slightly longer report on events at Maltby where young men had ‘clashed’ with the police – one miner complained that the town was under siege by the police, others claimed the trouble had been caused by skinheads while women shopping believed outsiders were responsible.<sup>69</sup> In the same month, June 1984, strike-related stories covered by *Look North*, but not by network news, included an interview with Labour Party leader Neil Kinnock during a visit to Sheffield; reaction from strikers at Kellingley, the region’s biggest pit, to a letter from NCB chairman Ian MacGregor asking miners to go back to work; a NUM meeting in Sheffield, and reporter Richard Wells travelling to a union executive committee in Derby with members of COSA, the clerical workers section of the NUM. According to Wells, the sight of film cameras stopped fifteen of the lobbyists from joining the coach.<sup>70</sup> *Look North*’s report on the funeral of Joe Green, crushed by a lorry while picketing Ferrybridge Power Station, was twice the length of the story on the 9pm News bulletin.<sup>71</sup> In April 1984 Richard Wells revisited Brampton where the strike had started just a few weeks earlier,<sup>72</sup> and *Look North* continued to report from those communities most affected by the strike with the wives of striking miners increasingly featured in these stories.<sup>73</sup> On the eve of the miners’ return to work in March 1985, *Look North* devoted the entire programme to ‘the dispute’ that ‘has touched every community of the region’. Reflecting on ‘how the strike was

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> *Look North: 4185*, 18 June 1984, BBC Leeds database, YFA

<sup>70</sup> *Look North: 4184*, 15 June 1984, BBC Leeds database, YFA

<sup>71</sup> *Look North: 4189*, 22 June 1984, BBC Leeds database, YFA. The reports stated that more than 8,000 miners attended the funeral.

<sup>72</sup> *Look North: 4132*, 4 April 1984, BBC Leeds database, YFA. Brampton was the location of Cortonwood colliery.

<sup>73</sup> See for example *Look North: 4157*, 9 May 1984, *4158* 10 May 1984, *4364*, 4 March 1985, BBC Leeds database, YFA.

fought at enormous cost', Richard Wells once again returned to Brampton where he talked to miner Don Keating and his wife Jackie about managing on £7 a week and why the miners had stayed out.<sup>74</sup> And just seven months later *Look North* was back in Brampton to speak to the Keating family about the closure of Cortonwood colliery on the following day.<sup>75</sup>

To coincide with the twenty-fifth anniversary of the strike a joint project between BBC Information and Archives and the University of Leeds looked at how the BBC's regional public audiences might interact with 'sensitive' archival sources.<sup>76</sup> The study focused on news stories transmitted in the region - regardless of whether they were regional or national reports - and how these stories were perceived by those most affected by the strike. A selection of news items was compiled by a BBC Archives researcher and shown to different focus groups, including miners and police officers, without any reference to their original context. Both miners and police thought the reporting of the events at Orgreave on 18 June 1984 was partial. Police participants 'were adamant that they were in the correct sequence and that it was the miners not the police who had unleashed the extreme violence and had caused the police to charge on horseback'. The research team was aware that 'the role played by the BBC remains deeply contested and that the strike's representation still has a residual effect on how communities regard the BBC'.<sup>77</sup> One former miner referred to the 'BBC reversal of events at Orgreave. Shots of miners throwing stones at police before showing mounted police charging the miners was wrong' as a typical misrepresentation.<sup>78</sup> The research report recommended: 'Regional material should be included in coverage of national events as it deals more effectively with the social consequences of events and reflects the impact on communities involved.'<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> *Look North:4364*, 4 March 1985, BBC Leeds database, YFA; *Look North*, Week 10, 1985, VHS, BBC Leeds library.

<sup>75</sup> *Look North: 4532*, 24 October 1985, BBC Leeds database, YFA.

<sup>76</sup> Simon Popple and Heather Powell, *AHRC/BBC Open Archive Project: The Miner's Strike: A Case Study in Regional Content*, 2009, accessed 31 October 2013, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/knowledgeexchange/leeds.pdf>

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 15

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 15n

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 24

A former striking miner, who participated in the BBC Archive/Leeds University study, displayed some sympathy for at least one BBC reporter caught up in reporting the strike:

And there were this BBC man there, and he's still ...correspondent,...I think you call him. Bloke with a beard. And they wanted to lynch him. They wanted to knock seven bells out of this bloke, which ... he were just a bloke on his own. And so ... I stepped in and said well it's not his fault for shit that's coming on telly. (Pause). Anyway, it all calmed down and nowt happened.<sup>80</sup>

And there were moments when Judith Stamper, reporting on the strike for *Look North*, found herself in difficult situations but it also provided her with some very different experiences:

I remember very clearly some of the tough days - not just the long days - of being seasick in the North Sea, or being carried by a whole load of miners just because the crowd was so big, losing my shoes, being kicked, being on the back page of *The Guardian* because of that. But the feeling as well of the warmth of those kinds of communities – one minute you were in a crowd like that, scared for your life and the next minute in some homey sitting room by a coal fire talking to miners who felt very passionate about their own communities, or talking to miners' wives who were dishing out soup in the kitchens because the miners didn't have any money.<sup>81</sup>

This suggests there was a 'dailiness' to reporting the strike but, although singled out here for discussion, with the exception of the 'special' strike edition of *Look North* transmitted on 4 March 1985, these reports appeared alongside a wide variety of stories and features. Judith Stamper could find herself in the studio introducing items or conducting interviews about the strike on one day, and on the next day be shown in Edwardian dress enjoying tea with co-presenter Harry Gratton at the York Castle Museum.<sup>82</sup> And on 9 July 1984 the calling of a national docks strike in support of the miners had to take second place to a report on the fire earlier that day which had destroyed most of the South Transept at York Minster.<sup>83</sup> Frank Gillard's hope that BBC local radio would provide a 'running serial story of local life in all its aspects'<sup>84</sup> could equally have been applied to regional television, and it is this narrative - as recollected by those who worked at BBC Leeds – to which this chapter now turns.

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 16

<sup>81</sup> Stamper, interview.

<sup>82</sup> *Look North: 4192*, 27 June 1984, BBC Leeds database, YFA

<sup>83</sup> *Look North: 4200*, 9 July 1984, BBC Leeds database, YFA

<sup>84</sup> See above, 88.



## A ‘running serial story’ of regional life

Alastair Hetherington, writing specifically about local and regional broadcasting in his 1989 study of the UK’s non-metropolitan media, provided a ‘seismic scale’ of news priorities: significance; drama; surprise; personalities; sex, scandal, crime; numbers-scale of event/number of people affected; proximity; good pictures.<sup>85</sup> That these ‘priorities’ are also reflected in many of the reminiscences contributed to this study is unsurprising; not only were these points in time where the interviewees felt that they were caught up in history-in-the-making but also experiences which they most likely felt would be of particular interest to the interviewer. As programme director Mike Robertson comments: ‘We had several major disasters which stretched us in a way I don’t think any of us had been stretched before’.<sup>86</sup>

Mike Robertson remembers being in the Leeds newsroom on 21 March 1973 when at lunchtime it became clear that seven miners who had knocked through to an underground reservoir at Lofthouse Colliery near Wakefield were now missing:

One of the first things I did was manage to get a hydraulic crane sent. Money was no object and that meant we had a camera that could cover everything that was going on around it... There was only room for one of these things at the pithead and we got there first. It was six days later before I left the site. My wife kept bringing sandwiches over, and a change of clothes, and we worked right through. It was quite horrendous. We were trying to get the best possible coverage of what was going on and, of course, down at the pit gates were all the families and friends who were in a terrible state because obviously they didn’t know whether they were alive or dead, and they weren’t allowed on the site and we were, so it was a very strange mixture of emotional pulls. Eventually they managed to get through to this chamber. They found one man inside it who was dead, and the other five were dead.<sup>87</sup>

According to Robertson only *Look North* managed to get shots of the rescuers but, he says, ‘there was a twist in the tale’ because the film was sent off to Manchester where it was used for a documentary: ‘They made a sixty-minute documentary on what had happened over the last six days which we should have done because it was all our material. While we were busy trying to

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<sup>85</sup> Alastair Hetherington, *News in the Regions: Plymouth Sound to Moray Firth* (London: Macmillan, 1989), 7.

<sup>86</sup> Mike Robertson, interview, Huddersfield, 29 May 2012.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.* By the end of the six-day rescue attempt only one body had been recovered.

get cameras to work in the pit yard, they were busy selling ideas to programme commissioners in London.’<sup>88</sup>

On 1 June 1974, a Saturday, Mike Robertson was in his garden when he heard on the BBC’s 6pm news bulletin that there had been an explosion at the Nypro UK plant at Flixborough in North Lincolnshire. Told to fix up an OB and ‘get himself down there’, he remembers that when he arrived it was difficult to approach the plant because of the spread of the blaze. The OB unit turned up at 6am the next day but an hour or two later, when ringing the London newsroom to ask for instructions, he discovered that the cleaner was the only person there: ‘In those days the main newsroom of the BBC was not manned overnight... You’d have thought they would have come in anyway because there was a big story unfolding.’ Later on, BBC News reporter Michael Buerk appeared with a London producer. Just before the 1pm news bulletin went on air, the OB crew were told to evacuate the site by the Fire Brigade but, not having heard the instruction, Robertson found himself lying in a ditch with Buerk. He says he will always remember the opening words of the reporter’s piece-to-camera after they emerged from the ditch: ‘A few moments ago whistles blew, bells rang, and the world’s media and press ran for their lives...’<sup>89</sup>

But *Look North*’s film cameras were also at Flixborough gathering material for the programme. Keith Massey remembers flying in a helicopter over the site with reporter Jeremy Thompson and it being ‘like Armageddon’.<sup>90</sup> In 2001 Paul Berriff was filming below the South Tower of the World Trade Centre when it collapsed, yet he has said that he can still ‘smell’ Flixborough: ‘The explosion was spread over a large acreage... the explosion had taken the top

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid. The documentary was most probably *Lofthouse: Aftermath of a Disaster*, 24 May 1973, accessed 20 November 2013, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NEt1tYBd2Gk>

<sup>89</sup> Robertson, interview.

<sup>90</sup> *The Men and their Movie Cameras* [DVD]

two feet off the corn in the fields'.<sup>91</sup> Film editor Edward Croot was faced with the problem of getting the film processed:

Eventually I got called in and we couldn't get the labs open, and there was Yorkshire Television and us desperate to get some colour film of this event so we decided we would process some colour film in the black and white bath and that used to take an absolute age but it did mean that for the late bulletin on BBC1 we could get some film out. When we'd done that, we did the same for Yorkshire Television so Yorkshire Television didn't get their pictures until nigh on midnight because it did take an awful long while.<sup>92</sup>

As had been the case at Lofthouse, network programme units were also competing for the Leeds material:

By contrast on the Sunday there was a cameraman called Paul Berriff who had filmed an awful lot of stuff, and he'd filmed it with sync-tapes<sup>93</sup> which were transferred; now there was a producer for a programme called *Nationwide*, a national programme [laughs], and he got his hands on the sound and he wouldn't let us have it because he wanted this London programme to have this material and there was a big stand off which lasted for quite some while...

Of course, the result of all of this was that on the Sunday we couldn't sync the stuff because we couldn't progress with it but on the Monday... we cut a thirty-five minute film which was open-ended. We were given open-ended access for the network and we ran this thirty-five minute film. It was quite something.<sup>94</sup>

The film – together with all the *Look North* film cameramen involved<sup>95</sup> – received the Royal Television Society's Television News Film of the Year award for 1974.

Twenty-eight people died as a result of the Flixborough explosion and a further 105 were injured, but no BBC cameras were present in May 1985 when a fire in which fifty-six people died broke out during a football match at Bradford City's stadium. Present in the ground were YTV and Pennine Radio who held the live match reporting rights, and it was their material that

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<sup>91</sup> *The Look North Years: 1974*, BNT Productions, BBC4, 2004. For Berriff's presence at 9/11 see 'Hull documentary film-maker's memories of 9/11 attacks', *BBC News Humber*, 9 September 2011, accessed 31 October 2013, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-humber-14862499>

<sup>92</sup> Croot, interview.

<sup>93</sup> See Glossary

<sup>94</sup> *The Flixborough Disaster*, BBC1 North, 11 May 1975.

<sup>95</sup> Described for the purpose of the award as the 'Hard News Team, BBC Leeds', accessed 20 November 2013, [http://www.rts.org.uk/sites/default/files/file/PDF's/Awards/Awards\\_Archive\\_February\\_2011.pdf](http://www.rts.org.uk/sites/default/files/file/PDF's/Awards/Awards_Archive_February_2011.pdf)

*Look North* used on the Monday following the fire<sup>96</sup> but the BBC was there to report on the aftermath of the story. But in terms of ‘newsworthiness’ the biggest single event covered by *Look North* in the period studied – and subsequently – was at Sheffield Wednesday’s Hillsborough stadium where, on 15 April 1989, ninety-six Liverpool fans lost their lives in Britain’s worst sporting disaster.<sup>97</sup> From the beginning this was not just a national but also an international story. Called in to work while the incident was developing, Edward Croot remembers spending almost all of the following week in his edit suite. On the second day he remembers dealing with ten ‘international’ companies who wanted pictures but that dealing with the BBC in London was not so easy:

We were always good at serving London, and I had come in, and we only had forty-five minutes before *Look North* went out, and before that was the national news, and I cut a bit for the national news and I cut something for *Look North Saturday* and it was no mean feat to get it out. And an hour or two later this editor turned up from TVN and said ‘You can go home now because I’m taking over’. ‘You what! After what I’ve just done, and I know the material.’ So I rang up London and there was some young man called Mark Byford who happened to be on duty that day and I said, ‘Mark, this isn’t on,’ and so the London editor was called home again.<sup>98</sup>

One advantage that regional journalists tend to have over news teams who turn up from London is an extensive network of local contacts. Continuity could be particularly useful; in his 1989 study of regional newsrooms Alastair Hetherington points out that *Look North* journalist Patrick O’Hara had reported on the coal industry for the *Yorkshire Post* for six years before coming to the BBC in 1979.<sup>99</sup> A senior journalist, who worked at *Look North* throughout the police hunt for the Yorkshire Ripper, commented to the author:

I got on extremely well with the police who were doing the Ripper enquiry to such an extent that we would meet frequently in local pubs and throw around ideas of what we could do, and what we couldn’t do, but I had a particularly good relationship with them I think: for example

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<sup>96</sup> *Look North: 4414*, 13 May 1985, BBC Leeds database, YFA.

<sup>97</sup> Sheffield-based cameraman Ian Young, who although freelance worked mostly for the BBC, was at Hillsborough to record a post-match interview and, having arrived early, was caught up in the disaster, filming it as it happened. Having previously refused to be interviewed by the media about the event, Ian and his son Jonathan, at Hillsborough as Ian’s sound recordist, recalled the event for the Guild of Television Cameramen’s journal which reflects on the dilemmas news cameramen face when caught up in such situations but also relates this to the mechanics and practice of picture-gathering in 1989: Ian and Jonathan Young, ‘Recollections of Hillsborough’, *Zerb: Guild of Television Cameramen*, Issue 77, Spring 2013, 28-34.

<sup>98</sup> Croot, interview. In 1989 Mark Byford was Home Editor, BBC News and Current Affairs.

<sup>99</sup> Hetherington, *News in the Regions*, 39.

suggesting they visit a little night club in Huddersfield to see if they could identify the voice of the Ripper.<sup>100</sup>

Erikson, Barrack and Chan have stated: ‘The reality of news is embedded in the nature and type of source relations that develop between journalists and their sources, and in the politics of knowledge that emerge on each specific news beat.’<sup>101</sup> Certainly this relationship might have been seen as a two-way process with the police also making use of *Look North*. When Beryl Leach, the mother of the Ripper’s twelfth victim, appealed on *Look North* to ask for help in catching her daughter’s murderer, the *Guardian* reported: ‘Her appeal, screened on [the] BBC’s regional Look North programme from Leeds, coincided with a police publicity campaign asking for help in catching the murderer.’<sup>102</sup> In his review into a series of police errors which allowed Peter Sutcliffe, jailed for murdering thirteen women in 1981, to avoid detection for so many years, HM Inspector of Constabulary Sir Lawrence Byford<sup>103</sup> also looked at relationships between the police and the media but there is nothing in his report to suggest that *Look North* journalists received any information that was not shared with the press and other broadcasters. Byford refers to a ‘mole’ within West Yorkshire Police who provided a ‘local paper’ with the transcript of the ‘Sunderland’ tape in advance of the press conference but that senior police officers timed the conference ‘to enable television to “scoop the press”’.<sup>104</sup>

Film editor Bob Geoghegan edited *Look North*’s ‘Ripper Special’, a sixteen-minute item, produced by Mike Smartt and Mark Byford, to be transmitted on the day Sutcliffe was convicted. In the course of reporting on the hunt for the Ripper as it happened, locating the library film had become a ‘nightmare’ because the original material relating to the murders had been cut and

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<sup>100</sup> Interview with the author here used anonymously.

<sup>101</sup> R.V. Erikson, P.M. Barrack and J.B.L Chan, *Negotiating Control: a study of news sources*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989) 377.

<sup>102</sup> ‘Ripper TV appeal’, *Guardian*, 12 October 1979; *Look North*:2984, 11 October 1979, BBC Leeds database, YFA

<sup>103</sup> And father of then BBC Leeds journalist Mark Byford.

<sup>104</sup> Sir Lawrence Byford, *The Yorkshire Ripper Case: Review of the Police Investigation of the Case* (London: Home Office, 1981), accessed 1 November 2013, <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20100418065544/http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/about-us/freedom-of-information/released-information/foi-archive-crime/1941-Byford-report/>. The report was made public in 2006 under the Freedom of Information Act.

moved to later stories. Geoghegan suggested that all the relevant footage should be pulled together to create a master reel and then prints could be made to use in subsequent items and was given time off rota to do this. Although a similar approach was used in copying the sound, he points out that it could never be complete because the commentary had been live. While the initial cut for the 'special' was undertaken in Leeds, it was finalised at BBC Television News in London where Geoghegan worked alongside the film editor who was cutting the network special with Leeds-based network news reporter Jeremy Thompson. Geoghegan comments: 'I suppose what I did then was to allow them to access all of the Yorkshire material through new prints so they could put it in their film.'<sup>105</sup> Certainly no evidence has been found to suggest that BBC Television News covered the murder of Wilma McCann, the first of Sutcliffe's thirteen victims, in October 1975. The Byford report also supports the view that there was little or no network interest in 1975 and 1976.<sup>106</sup> After dubbing, the *Look North* 'special' was sent down the line to Leeds for transmission that night with the fifty-minute 'News Special', *The Yorkshire Ripper: Murder and Myth*, being transmitted nationally on the same evening.

And there were other long-running stories remembered by those who were involved in their telling. Looking back at his career, Martin Noble believes his 'biggest TV "scoop"' was probably the arrest of Lord Kagan in Paris':

Basically I was there with a BBC TV [film] camera crew and our reporter Jeremy Thompson when the French police caught him as he was leaving a financier's office. Again there was a 'deal'...this time with HM Customs & Excise who held the international arrest warrant and I recollect attending a long, long meeting with the French persuading them to co-operate. Interestingly the guy who made the final decision to co-operate shared my interest in rugby!<sup>107</sup>

Joseph Kagan, the West Yorkshire based manufacturer whose Gannex mackintosh had been made famous by Harold Wilson, was arrested in Paris in April 1980. But *Look North* had a second scoop when, shortly after his release in 1981, having served six months for theft and false

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<sup>105</sup> Geoghegan, interview.

<sup>106</sup> Byford, *The Yorkshire Ripper Case*, 1981

<sup>107</sup> Martin Noble, email to author, 2 February 1980

accounting, the former industrialist was happy to give a lengthy interview to Judith Stamper which - because Kagan claimed to have been offered a directorship in a Spanish company - was quoted in the following day's *Guardian*: 'I explained at the time that my total energies and loyalty would be to my companies in Yorkshire.'<sup>108</sup> It is tempting to think that Kagan had some notion of a regional audience which may have included those within the TV region who depended on his companies for their livelihood, or who lived in Elland where the Gannex factory had been the major employer.

Not just getting the story but also getting the pictures could be a challenge as Keith Massey discovered when, filming from the top of the new Emley Moor transmitter tower<sup>109</sup> before it was completed, he found himself standing on just two planks with a six-hundred feet drop. He remembers being even more frightened of the News Editor's reaction if he returned without the pictures than he was of falling off the mast.<sup>110</sup> In 1984 when *Look North* camera crews were in the process of changing from film to ENG, the 'temptation to do things on videotape' meant that the opportunity to film the fire at York Minster was missed because of a decision not to call out the nearest cameraman as he had not yet changed over to tape.<sup>111</sup> This matters because news is by its nature repetitive: a story develops, it is revisited or new questions have to be asked. In the case of York Minster the story was the restoration of the building after the fire but there were always big ongoing stories such as the delays in the construction of the Humber Bridge, which when eventually completed in 1981 would provide the region with an iconic image that featured in the programme's tile sequence for some years, or the circumstances surrounding the disappearance of the missing Hull trawler, the *Gaul*.<sup>112</sup> News stories are concerned with history in the making and, as with all historical research, new evidence may be found and new versions

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<sup>108</sup> *Look North: 3455*, 14 August 1981; Michael Parkin, 'Kagan gets offer from abroad', *Guardian*, 15 August 1981.

<sup>109</sup> The ITA's Emley Moor tower, which also provided UHF transmission for BBC2, opened in 1971.

<sup>110</sup> *The Men and their Movie Cameras* [DVD].

<sup>111</sup> Patrick Hargreaves, interview with author, Bradford, 20 October 2010.

<sup>112</sup> The wreck of the *Gaul* was finally discovered in 1997 and in 1998 a BBC Leeds crew accompanied the Marine Accident Investigation Bureau on an underwater survey:

of events emerge as has been shown by the allegations concerning the altering of statements by South Yorkshire police officers at both Hillsborough and Orgreave leading to new investigations.<sup>113</sup>

While this chapter has largely focused on filmed reports, *Look North* presenter Judith Stamper points to the importance of the studio interview and discussion where the journalist's role is to ask 'difficult questions' of those involved in the big stories (she cites Hillsborough) observing that 'whatever the debate, these actors came into the studio'. She believes she was well known for her interviews with both Arthur Scargill and NCB chairman Ian McGregor and recalls interviewing Margaret Thatcher, when she was Prime Minister, on two occasions.<sup>114</sup> Alastair Hetherington, having observed the production of *Look North* on 25 January 1988 during a NUM overtime ban, described one of Judith Stamper's studio interviews with Arthur Scargill in some detail:

Recording starts; Mr Scargill instantly looks serious. Hard questioning from Judith on narrowed margin of his support, possible loss of members to UDM, need for serious negotiation with Coal Board, the obstacle of the overtime ban, threat to investment and productivity; Mr Scargill adamant that Coal Board does not want to talk to union, and he accuses Judith of not listening to his replies. Interview ends at just over 4 minutes. Arthur Scargill, Judith Stamper and Producer Peter [sic] are all satisfied with it. But there is a small sound fault at start, so first question and answer are re-recorded. Mr Scargill then leaves for Yorkshire Television, still in cheerful mood.<sup>115</sup>

Reporter David Seymour remembers interviewing a much younger Arthur Scargill and points out such interviews were also relevant to the political community because trade unions were more important than they are today,<sup>116</sup> and even as late as 1988 industrial action by the NUM was still a political story.

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<sup>113</sup> See, for example, 'IPCC apologise for Orgreave probe delay', BBC News, 14 November 2013, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-south-yorkshire-24938267>, 'Hillsborough: South Yorkshire Police consider IPCC referral', BBC News, 14 September 2012 <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-19592455>, accessed 20 November 2013.

<sup>114</sup> Stamper, interview.

<sup>115</sup> Hetherington, *News in the Regions*, 44.

<sup>116</sup> Seymour, interview.



As with the local and regional press, local government was an important source of news. According to David Seymour, not only have the region's traditional industries 'virtually' disappeared but 'twenty years of rampant centralism' have taken away the power of local government; when *Look North* began in the late 1960s Sir Ron Ironmonger 'was running' Sheffield with Sir Frank Marshall doing much the same in Leeds.<sup>117</sup> But a major story affecting both region and nation was the exposé of corruption in local government sparked off by the investigation into the affairs of Pontefract architect John Poulson. The reporting of the Poulson Affair is discussed in more detail later in this study,<sup>118</sup> but for Seymour who played a pivotal role in *Look North's* coverage of the story, even securing an interview with the architect, 'it changed the nation's perception of honesty in local government. There were many ramifications on that to this very day incidentally. It was one of the political themes that drained away a lot of the political power from local government. It began a whole disenchantment...'<sup>119</sup> But, from fly-tipping to housing and public transport, many *Look North* stories were concerned with the activities of local and county councils. These were years in which new local authorities came into existence but were also abolished – the metropolitan counties in West and South Yorkshire created in 1974 lasted just twelve years while discontent with both the existence and boundaries of Humberside, which took in parts of Lincolnshire and the former East Riding of Yorkshire, provided a ready source of stories until the county's abolition in 1996.<sup>120</sup> And *Look North* was there to report on what David Seymour refers to as 'twenty years of rampant centralism' as they happened; in Sheffield, the Labour-controlled council led by David Blunkett attempted to resist

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<sup>117</sup> Ibid. Sir Ronald Ironmonger (Labour) was Leader of Sheffield City Council (1969-1974) and Leader of South Yorkshire County Council (1973-1979); Sir Frank Marshall (Conservative), later Baron Marshall of Leeds was Leader of Leeds City Council (1967-1972).

<sup>118</sup> See below, Chapter Five.

<sup>119</sup> Seymour, interview.

<sup>120</sup> See, for example, *Look North: 3574* 12 October 1982 on 'discontent' in North Lincolnshire or *Look North: 3302* 3 January 1981, interview with campaigner Trevor Pearson of the East Yorkshire Action Group, BBC Leeds database, YFA.

the Thatcher government.<sup>121</sup> Although such stories were also referenced on the national news, regional television provided a space where they could be developed on a daily basis with the knowledge that they would be even more relevant for at least some part of the regional audience.<sup>122</sup>

That MPs also saw that regional television had its part to play in the political public sphere is illustrated by a remark made in the Commons by Morley and Leeds South MP, Merlyn Rees, while accusing the government of indifference regarding the effects of a teachers' strike: 'I do not want to watch "Look North" or the "Calendar" programme, or wait until after 10.30 pm tonight, to see it all discussed on television. I want the matter debated on the Floor of the House'.<sup>123</sup> In an interview with the author, David Hinchliffe, MP for Wakefield from 1987 to 2005, spoke about the importance of having a good relationship with local media and of working on his relationships with local and regional broadcasters; he soon learned that you were more likely to get a speech reported if you took a particular angle.<sup>124</sup> Former Assistant News Editor Jim Graham, who went on to run Border TV believes that while ITV companies were expected to reflect their region, regionalism at the BBC tended to be reflected in public affairs: 'The BBC expected you to have it in the genes, know what the BBC stood for - balance, impartiality and high standards - and reflect those in the region. You'd get all the mayors and MPs; the emphasis was politics. It was clearly understood.'<sup>125</sup> Alastair Hetherington in his comparison of *Look North* and *Calendar* in January 1988 notes that while the news priorities of the programme teams were much the same, on one day *Look North* led with the Labour Party's decision to begin a

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<sup>121</sup> See, for example, *Look North: 3485*, 25 September 1981

<sup>122</sup> The region's opt-out features slots were also used to give viewers some insight into how local government worked eg *The Other Government* (1974), *The Rating Game* (1976), *Blunkett's Republic* (1982). See also Appendix Three.

<sup>123</sup> 'Teachers – Industrial Action', *Hansard*, 21 May 1984, accessed 31 October 2013, [http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1984/may/21/teachers-industrial-action#S6CV0060P0\\_19840521\\_HOC\\_178](http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1984/may/21/teachers-industrial-action#S6CV0060P0_19840521_HOC_178)

<sup>124</sup> David Hinchliffe, interview with the author for the History of Parliament Oral History Project, Holmfirth, 15 July 2013.

<sup>125</sup> Graham, interview.

further enquiry into the Militant Tendency's activities in Bradford while *Calendar*, believing it was less politically significant than previously, made do with a thirty-second item towards the end of the programme.<sup>126</sup> Following the de-selection of Bradford North's sitting MP Ben Ford in 1982, the divisions within the constituency had become an ongoing story. Profiling the constituency during the 1983 general election campaign, reporter Mike Smartt commented: 'Issues such as these can be found in other constituencies up and down the country.'<sup>127</sup> What was happening in Bradford North was being portrayed on *Look North* as a national story.

But constituency profiles were as much part of *Look North*'s election coverage as were the reports of national figures dropping in to campaign, and although these usually highlighted local issues - particularly those places where jobs were threatened - there was often some attempt to project a sense of place within those profiles. A Euro-constituency profile of Yorkshire West in 1984 included shots of terraces and children cycling along cobbled streets but there were also shots of shoppers in a busy precinct,<sup>128</sup> while a profile of York for the 1983 general election showed the Minster and the city walls as well as the Rowntree factory.<sup>129</sup> Jim Graham outlines what he believes to be the role of the regional broadcaster:

You look for the good, you look for the aspiration, you give voice to it and, of course, you reinforce constantly identity through people hearing about their town, about their weather, building a sense of pride, there's no harm in that, and [you] take its [the region's] side in political issues, like the North East was jealous of Westminster's aid to Scotland and, fine, you could reflect that.<sup>130</sup>

There is little evidence to suggest that *Look North* journalists actively took the region's side in 'political issues' in the way Graham suggests but the programme did have more time to explore the regional aspects of what were frequently national stories. But it is to the consideration of

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<sup>126</sup> Hetherington, *News in the Regions*, 19.

<sup>127</sup> *Look North: 3916*, 1 June 1983, 16mm film, YFA

<sup>128</sup> *Look North: 4182*, 12 June 1984, BBC Leeds database, YFA

<sup>129</sup> *Look North: 3911*, 25 May 1983. BBC Leeds database, YFA

<sup>130</sup> Graham, interview.

those features which surrounded the ‘hard news’ content in the programme, where it was possible to reflect ‘aspiration’, that this chapter now turns.

## **Sport, singing shepherds and mole-shooting vicars**

Viewers tuning in to *Look North* - or indeed any other regional TV news magazine - would expect to find a mix of light and serious items. Even in the edition which followed the arrest of Peter Sutcliffe in 1981, although the first seven items of the programme were devoted to aspects of the Yorkshire Ripper story and, immediately after the weather forecast the Leeds studio went live into *Nationwide* where *Look North* presenter Khalid Aziz interviewed Superintendent Morrill from the Ripper Squad, space was still found in the programme for stories on football, bendy buses and apprentices.<sup>131</sup> As this suggests, sport was very much part of the daily mix and, there were many great regional sporting moments – often shown again and again - but as studio director Mike Robertson observed it could also create production problems as in the staging of the draw for the Rugby League Challenge Cup:

Every year this nightmare programme went out where Manchester and Leeds tried to do two separate live programmes at the same time because Manchester wanted to have their presenter doing the draw, and we wanted Eddie Waring, so the thing had to be shot in such a way that you could pull away from Eddie Waring whenever he appeared and substitute whoever was the person at their end, and you could guarantee we got the timings wrong, the shots were wrong.

He came up with the idea that ‘instead of this being an event which we covered, it was one which we were going to create’; it would be scripted and rehearsed.<sup>132</sup> And, looking back to the earliest days of *Look North*, David Jones remembered being asked to produce and present a ten-minute regional Saturday ‘opt-out’ from *Grandstand* and discovering he had only ten minutes after the ‘final whistle’ to write the script and look for stills before ‘driving the studio desk’,

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<sup>131</sup> Running order, *Look North: 3301*, 5 January 1981, YFA.

<sup>132</sup> Robertson, interview

opting out from the network and cutting to a camera fixed on Eddie Waring when required.<sup>133</sup>

Anecdotes, detailing both the rugby league draw and the presence of Waring, reflect the way the sport of rugby league, born in Yorkshire although also played west of the Pennines, was used to suggest regional identity. That sport was seen to be central to that identity is suggested by the appointment in 1984 of former BBC Leeds Sports editor Harry Gration to present *Look North* alongside Judith Stamper.<sup>134</sup>

Sport was also a useful way of portraying and celebrating regional achievement as is shown in Appendix Two, but it should also be noted that sporting heroes were usually so defined because they had achieved at least some degree of national success, and in the case of cultural heroes such as film star James Mason (from Huddersfield) and artists Barbara Hepworth (from Wakefield), Henry Moore (from Castleford) and David Hockney (from Bradford) considerable international fame. But the retelling of their achievements and of linking these major figures to their regional origins was one way in which *Look North* journalists could feel they were ‘building a sense of pride’ in their region as well as extending their coverage beyond the industrial heartland of ‘hard news’.<sup>135</sup> Very few outside of the Yorkshire folk music circle had probably heard of Arthur Howard, who had worked as a shepherd above Penistone, until he released an album of his songs in 1981. Film editor Bob Geoghegan, who cut the story for *Look North*, remembers that the record release provided a news ‘peg’ for the programme. The transmitted item lasted for about four minutes,<sup>136</sup> but Geoghegan was so affected by the ‘bit of Yorkshire’ conveyed by the singing shepherd that he not only kept the rushes but re-edited them

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<sup>133</sup> BBC TV North staff, *Talented, Difficult, Cussed, Lovely people*.

<sup>134</sup> See Harry Gration, *Harry Gration: Yorkshire Sporting Heroes* (Skipton: Dalesman, 2009) for an account which contains many references to *Look North*'s sports coverage.

<sup>135</sup> See, for example, a story about a visit of school children to an exhibition of Moore's work in Bradford which also includes footage of Brimham Rocks in the Yorkshire Dales to emphasize the importance of the Yorkshire landscape to Moore's work: *Look North* 22 June 1978, BBC Archive, accessed 31 October 2013, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/archive/henrymoore/8813.shtml>

<sup>136</sup> *Look North*: 3494, 8 October 1981.

to include all of Howard's songs.<sup>137</sup> He says: 'I don't think the newsroom quite realised that what we were filming was history'.<sup>138</sup>

If Bob Geoghegan is right about this, and subjects like Arthur Howard were seen as being of local or regional interest, there was certainly a concern to catch up with national or international celebrities when they were in the region. Probably the most important visit to the region was that made by Pope John Paul II to York Racecourse on 31 May 1982 but by building up to the event with a series of previews, *Look North* ensured it was also very much a regional story. On the day after the event Mike Smartt reported on the marriage of a Catholic woman to a non-Catholic man which had taken place at Beverley in the previous week with the newly-weds receiving a blessing from the Pope during his visit.<sup>139</sup> Twenty-five years after Louis Armstrong's visit to Batley, reporter Barry Chambers spoke with pride of how he got the only interview with the star during his 1968 visit to Britain by continuing to talk to him as he left the plane at Leeds-Bradford Airport.<sup>140</sup> But Armstrong's presence in Batley was also a regional story. This was not the case with Bing Crosby who had come to Yorkshire to shoot grouse, or perhaps with Paul McCartney who, touring with his band Wings, was followed around by a reporter and crew for three days until he gave Barry Chambers an interview.<sup>141</sup> In 1969 when Leeds was nominally at least part of a Manchester-led North region, Grahame Miller, the North Region's Head of Programmes wrote to Bill Greaves criticizing the running order of the programme on what should have been a 'hard news' day.<sup>142</sup> William Davis, the Editor of *Punch* magazine had

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<sup>137</sup> Bob Geoghegan, interview with author, Huddersfield, 25 November 2011.

<sup>138</sup> Because *Look North* filmed Arthur Howard singing on the hillside surrounded by sheep rather than in the village pubs where he usually performed, the item has been criticized for perpetuating 'the myth of the happy singing labourer' (Marek Korczynski, Michael Pickering, Emma Robertson, *Rhythms of Labour: Music at Work in Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 113-114. However, it is commonplace for television crews to place their subjects in locations which they believe will best illustrate the story.

<sup>139</sup> *Look North: 3658*, 1 June 1982, BBC Leeds database, YFA.

<sup>140</sup> While Barry Chambers certainly interviewed Louis Armstrong, the film of the interview has long been missing and it would seem that ITN got an interview a few days later.

<sup>141</sup> *The Men and their Movie Cameras* [DVD]; that the rushes for this item were sent to the BBC Film Library suggests that they were seen to be of national interest.

<sup>142</sup> The Radcliffe-Maud report on the reorganization of local government was published on 7 June 1969 but it had been impossible to get the necessary circuits to lead on the story.

appeared on the programme and Miller went on to ask: ‘Do you think we ought to be taken for a ride in a sense by these travelling salesmen who nip smartly round the Region and get themselves separate pieces in all our area editions of "Look North"?’<sup>143</sup>

From the ‘game’ of Haxey Hood in North Lincolnshire to the ‘World Dock Pudding Championship’ in the Calder Valley, tradition and customs provided opportunities for good colour stories with clearly identified regional roots.<sup>144</sup> Indeed, from 1983 *Look North* staff could have used a guide produced by YTV’s *Calendar* team to help diary such events.<sup>145</sup> But while Yorkshire tradition might have also have been emphasised by items on Yorkshire Day or by a few stories relating to dialect, the lighter items tended to reflect the wide variety of activities in which people in the region were engaged. As with all magazine programmes, there was usually space for the unexpected and the idiosyncratic, from the pigeon flying alongside its owner’s car<sup>146</sup> to a ‘mole-shooting vicar’, but, as with the film of Batley discussed earlier in this chapter, it is not always clear when broadcasters are ridiculing their subjects.<sup>147</sup>

One indication of the role the lighter stories were seen to play in the programme mix came from BBC Leeds copytaker Sheila Clarke when, on 1 November 1988 as part of the BFI’s *One Day in the Life of Television* project, she kept a diary of her working day:

Our main local news story is a murder remand. A 16-year-old girl has been strangled and her body dumped at the side of the M1 motorway near Wakefield. It will be our lead story on *Look North* tonight. During a typical day the bulk of the stories we take down and send on to local radio stations and other BBC television centres will be made up of murders, robberies, child abuse, assault and battery, muggings and fatal road accidents. Sometimes it’s hard to remain detached, and often a particularly nasty story involving young children will affect us deeply.

Fortunately we have Horace the Hamster to keep us sane today. He disappeared in a chemist’s shop two weeks ago... Luckily, a passing policeman spotted the hamster... and effected a rescue.

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<sup>143</sup> Grahame Miller to Area News Editor Leeds, 13 June 1969, ‘Leeds: Area Television Development’, WAC N25/38/1

<sup>144</sup> *Look North:1496*, 7 January 1974; *Look North: 2609*, 26 April 1979, BBC Leeds database, YFA. The Twelfth Night ‘game’ of Haxey Hood is believed to date from mediaeval times.

<sup>145</sup> Maurice Colbeck (ed.) *The Calendar Year: A Celebration of Events in the Yorkshire Television Region*, (Leeds: EP Publishing/Yorkshire Television Enterprises, 1983)

<sup>146</sup> *Look North:3160*, 19 June 1980. BBC Enterprises (now BBC Worldwide) sold the ‘Pidge’ story to more than one US television station.

<sup>147</sup> Removed from its original context, the shotgun-wielding vicar was included in many retrospective compilations.

Horace didn't appear to be too grateful...he bit the policeman's finger and is now in custody at the local police station.<sup>148</sup>

Writing in 2008 in support of BBC plans to commission more material from around the UK, the BBC's Director of Nations and Regions Pat Loughrey emphasized that the role of BBC regional and local broadcasting was to provide its audiences with trustworthy information:

We collect the licence fee from every street in the UK and each community should feel some sort of benefit. I call it a pyramid of needs. At the bottom of that pyramid are crucial, vital questions about everyday life, like: Is it safe for my kids to go out tonight? What is my local council intending to do about refuse collection?

We need a news service to tell us. And we need to know, in a time of crisis, like floods or snow, foot and mouth, or a terrorist attack, that there is a secure, impartial and accurate source of information to help us live our lives.<sup>149</sup>

Bill Greaves and his team would certainly have understood this definition of the programme's role when they launched *Look North* in 1968, but, by itself, they had discovered that this was not enough to fill a daily TV magazine. According to Assistant News Editor Martin Noble: 'One had the opportunity to do all sorts of unusual things because we had a marvellous team and everyone was interested in promoting new ideas.'<sup>150</sup> From stories about seals at Donna Nook to items looking back at the 617 (Dambusters) Squadron based at Woodhall Spa during World War Two, this also provided the opportunity to do more stories in Lincolnshire, an area which was not seen as part of the regional heartland. Hard news would always be the priority but, in the spaces in between, viewers were provided with impressions that reflected the diversity both of place and of the activities that were happening across the region.

## Region and nation

Reporter and *Look North* presenter Judith Stamper maintains that Yorkshire was seen in the BBC as 'the coal face of hard news' and that it was 'a lot less local and regional than people

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<sup>148</sup> Sean Day-Lewis (ed.) *One day in the life of television* (London: Grafton, 1990), 232.

<sup>149</sup> Loughrey, 'News of the Future', *Made in the UK*

<sup>150</sup> Noble, interview.



expect'<sup>151</sup> and the film cans themselves, preserved at the Yorkshire Film Archive, tell part of that story, frequently containing some indication that an item had been physically sent from Leeds to 'News', *Nationwide* or to other programmes and studios across the BBC. And it wasn't just the pictures. In his autobiography, former BBC D-G Alasdair Milne remembers that when working on the early evening programme *Highlight* in 1955: 'We depended quite heavily on colleagues in the regions arranging for interviewees to appear in regional studios to be interviewed "down the line", thereby establishing relationships which would reach their full flower later on.'<sup>152</sup> When freelance cameraman Keith Massey filmed the York floods for the first edition of *Look North*, using a silent handheld camera to augment the main sound footage filmed by David Brierley, he remembers having to film in both black-and-white for *Look North* and television news, and in colour for BBC 2.<sup>153</sup> With the exception of John Burns, *Look North*'s first reporters, being freelancers, were paid by the item and in the days before network news correspondents were based in the regions, reporters found themselves working for both the region and for the network, and for both radio and TV. David Seymour recalls one day when, covering a story about the hunt for a gunman – with the help of two camera crews (one shooting in black-and-white, the other in colour), a Uher tape recorder for the radio stories, and a dispatch rider - he provided nineteen different reports.<sup>154</sup>

It has been shown earlier in this chapter that, when it came to the big stories, BBC staff in Leeds sometimes had to fight to use material they had originated. This was particularly the case with *Nationwide*, launched in September 1969 and transmitted immediately after *Look North*.<sup>155</sup> (It is difficult to understand why in their classic study of the *Nationwide* audience, David Morley and Charlotte Brunsdon date the beginning of the programme to 1966<sup>156</sup> but it does reflect the

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<sup>151</sup> Stamper, interview.

<sup>152</sup> Milne, Alasdair. *DG: Memoirs of a British Broadcaster*. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1988.

<sup>153</sup> *The Men and their Movie Cameras* [DVD].

<sup>154</sup> Seymour, interview.

<sup>155</sup> The *Nationwide* titles and programme round-up preceded *Look North*

<sup>156</sup> David Morley and Charlotte Brunsdon, *The Nationwide Television Studies* (London: Routledge, 1999), 25.

failure throughout the study to differentiate between the London-based programme and the very separate and, indeed, pre-existing regional magazines.) BBC Leeds studio director Mike Robertson reflects on some of the difficulties caused by *Nationwide*'s presence in Leeds:

...deciding who did what was an ongoing dialogue. Obviously Leeds felt they wanted to do everything, and I'm sure other regions felt the same, and *Nationwide* wanted their people to do it because they didn't trust us to do it to their standard. The thing which happened repeatedly and caused a great deal of angst was what we call in the trade 'bumping', and this meant that you brought somebody in to appear on the programme and you had to entertain them for an hour or more until they were due to go into the studio to be interviewed...only to get, 'terribly sorry, we've run out of time. We'll have to leave it there', and the programme finished, and you were left with a very angry person who [had] probably travelled a hundred miles or something to get to the studio...They got dropped because we were there to fill in at the bottom end. If it was a big story, for obvious reasons it made sense for them to use their presenters or reporters.

Although *Nationwide* later appointed a researcher in each regional TV station who could also take care of contributors, 'their loyalty was obviously to their masters in London'.<sup>157</sup> Morley and Brunsdon comment that despite its regional stories, 'London is the "absent" region, the invisible bearer of national unity. It is both technologically and ideologically the heart of the programme'.<sup>158</sup> *Nationwide* did, albeit very infrequently, venture out of the capital; in January 1978 the programme came every day for a week 'from the BBC Leeds studio'<sup>159</sup> and for a time regional presenters had their own spot in the programme as part of a regular 'Grass Roots' strand.<sup>160</sup>

Frequently *Nationwide* duplicated stories that had already been carried by the BBC's regional news magazine. *Guardian* columnist Robin Thorber, writing at a time when it was feared that the regions would be badly affected by economies yet to be announced by the BBC, referred to an occasion where a 'Nationwide circus of reporters and researchers descended on Newcastle' to report on the closure of the Consett steelworks<sup>161</sup> even though the story had already been transmitted in the region. His claim was quickly disputed by the BBC's Head of Current Affairs

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<sup>157</sup> Robertson, interview

<sup>158</sup> Morley and Brunsdon, *The Nationwide Television Studies*, 27.

<sup>159</sup> *Guardian*, 22 January 1978

<sup>160</sup> *Guardian*, 19 February 1981

<sup>161</sup> Robin Thornber, 'The Fat Cat Syndrome', *Guardian* 12 March 1980.

Programmes, John Gau, who commented: ‘What is sad about the casual smears passed on by Robin Thorber is that it divides staff within the BBC and deflects the public from the real issue.’<sup>162</sup> *Nationwide* was replaced by *Sixty Minutes* in October 1983, but this time the regional magazines, including *Look North*, lost their distinctive opening titles. Lesley Riddoch, now a journalist, remembers: ‘As a teenager in Belfast, I recall the accents, debate, personalities, colour and genuine curiosity when "regional" difference was uncovered and poked about. When *Nationwide* was replaced by *Sixty Minutes* in 1983, the mono-culture set in.’<sup>163</sup> *Sixty Minutes* lasted less than a year but its lifetime included the events at Orgreave on 18 June 1984, and it is possible that the format made it more difficult for viewers to know whether they were watching a national or regional programme. And although even *Nationwide* could be useful as Martin Noble found when he persuaded the programme to cover an item on mini-rugby because he ‘knew it would get better circulation’ than on *Look North* and he wanted the sport to take off,<sup>164</sup> it is probable that for most of the TV staff in Leeds, little was gained by being tied to *Nationwide*.

In 1984 Martin Brooks moved from BBC local radio to the BBC TV in Leeds as Assistant News Editor to discover that the newsroom had begun to resemble ‘a transit camp with national and international crews, reporters, producers and fixers all clamouring to use our over worked facilities’.<sup>165</sup> Alastair Hetherington provides a detailed account of how, four years later, *Look North* and network needs had to be juggled when it came to covering the Scargill story referred to earlier in this chapter:

Lingham [the BBC Leeds News Editor] hoped that they (Leeds) would not get to ‘loggerheads’ with network over the use of crews. Network demands take precedence over regional requirements in allocating crews; the BBC has only 2 in Leeds, 1 in Sheffield and 1 in Humberside. But there was also a network links vehicle in Sheffield to permit transmission direct

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<sup>162</sup> Letters to the Editor, *Guardian*, 14 March 1980.

<sup>163</sup> Lesley Riddoch, ‘Marginally regional’, *The Guardian*, 12 June 2008, accessed 31 October 2013, <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2008/jun/12/scotland.bbc>

<sup>164</sup> Noble, interview

<sup>165</sup> *Talented, Difficult, Cussed, Lovely people*, 61

to London...in a television newsroom much more time has to be spent on the mechanics and logistics of newsgathering and presentation than in a radio newsroom or a newspaper.<sup>166</sup>

But, according to Mike Robertson, there were times when the region could call upon the Corporation's wider resources. When it came to covering general elections, 'anything you wanted, if it was for the election, you got'. He remembers going down to London for election night programme rehearsals and finding it 'quite extraordinary...They seemed to have a camera and outside broadcast unit at every count, and we are talking about six hundred. The scale of that operation was just amazing and it was a big thing in our terms too'.<sup>167</sup> But BBC staff in the regions usually took it for granted that – from dubbing facilities to gramophone records – they could make use of the Corporation's wider resources and expertise. Judith Stamper points out the 'flipside' of the BBC's 'metropolitan bias' was that the production staff in Leeds had the rest of the BBC's resources at their disposal, that these extended across the world and that 'the BBC is the sum of its bureaux, wherever they are'.<sup>168</sup>

## Conclusion

The struggles over output and resources, and the lack of confidence in the regions by some of those who worked on network programmes, would seem to confirm Anthony King's view that 'a state of something like war has sometimes existed between the BBC in London and some of its operational centres elsewhere in the country. Old soldiers who fought in those wars have tales to tell'.<sup>169</sup> Some of those tales have certainly found a place in this chapter. But it can also be argued that this was partly because the various parts of the Corporation were so closely connected and, no matter how irksome such relations could be, for BBC journalists in Leeds gathering news not just for the region but for the nation was always an important part of the job.

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<sup>166</sup> Hetherington, *News in the Regions*, 39

<sup>167</sup> Robertson, interview.

<sup>168</sup> Stamper, interview

<sup>169</sup> Anthony King, 'BBC Network News and Current-Affairs Coverage of the four UK Nations: An Independent Assessment for the BBC Trust', 2008, 72.

They saw themselves as working not for a BBC region but for the BBC and this influenced every aspect of their working lives.

The evidence presented here suggests that the notion of regionalism that prevailed in the BBC Leeds newsroom very much followed Mike Alder's view from 1969 that the job of a BBC regional newsroom was 'to keep abreast of the political, industrial and economic developments in the region, to report and film the accidents and disasters' but in reporting such stories, to also represent local points of view. And, while BBC News was frequently not content to leave the coverage of the 'big' stories to their colleagues in the Corporation's regional newsrooms, BBC journalists in Leeds and elsewhere were there to follow those stories before or after they made national news headlines. And occasionally the persistent seeing-through of a story did produce a coup for the region – *Look North* reporter David Seymour was the only journalist to get an interview with John Poulson at the time of his bankruptcy hearings.

For the *Look North* journalists, who contributed to this study, the region was defined not by its culture or any notion of Yorkshireness but to a large extent by the region's industry. This emphasis could also be seen as perpetuating the stereotypical view of the North of England but work is the means by which most people earn their livelihood and it is central both to their own lives and to the communities in which they live. In addition, Yorkshire's traditional industries were also very much of its landscape but its people were also part of that landscape. It is vital that the manner in which the 1984-1985 miners' strike was reported remains a subject of debate both within and outside of the academy because as the BBC states in its Editorial Guidelines, 'due accuracy' is 'fundamental to our reputation and the trust of audiences'.<sup>170</sup> While the *Look North* report of the events at Orgreave on 18 June 1984 did not challenge the version of the event shown in the BBC's national news bulletins, *Look North* journalists had been there talking to miners' families before the strike when the Yorkshire coalfield was expanding, were there

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<sup>170</sup> 'Guidelines, Section Three: Accuracy', accessed 2 December 2013, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/editorialguidelines/page/guidelines-accuracy-introduction>

talking to miners' families during the strike and were back talking to those families after the pits had closed.

In 1969 Mike Alder had also seen that there was room for the 'unusual and the 'off-beat'.<sup>171</sup> It was those spaces in *Look North* that provided BBC production staff with the opportunity not only to reflect the cultural life of the region in its widest sense but also to be creative. Judith Stamper observes: 'It wasn't so much that you felt these were about Yorkshire so much, although obviously they were – this was a beautiful film, or a shocking film or an informative film and it was really well done by everybody concerned, lovingly.'<sup>172</sup> The feature items in *Look North* also helped to prepare the way for the half-hour regional programmes made by the BBC in Leeds from 1971 which form the subject of the next chapter.



**Figure 11:** Reporter Barry Chambers in Leeds city centre publicizing the arrival of *Look North* in 1968.

(Source: still frame, *A Celebration of 25 Years of Television Broadcasting by the BBC in Leeds*, 1993)

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<sup>171</sup> See above, 106.

<sup>172</sup> Stamper, interview

## Chapter Four: A sense of Yorkshire? Regional representation in television feature programmes

Until fifty years ago, the county was the largest unit below nationhood which commanded any loyalty or acceptance, and I suspect that the concept 'region' – now so familiar to us in connection with British Rail, Economic Planning Councils, the Gas Board, and so on – was practically unheard of before the BBC introduced it in the 'thirties'.<sup>1</sup>

Nothing really changes, especially in television. The old formula keeps on repeating itself.<sup>2</sup>

### Introduction

According to Patrick Beech, Controller of the BBC's English Regions speaking in 1970, regional broadcasting originated in the 1930s only because the BBC had wanted to give radio audiences a choice of programmes. But Beech was speaking at the point at which the BBC was about to redraw its regional map.<sup>3</sup> Where there had been three English regions - a situation inherited from radio - there would now be eight, each producing television programmes for their region in addition to their existing TV news magazines.<sup>4</sup> Although resources would, at first, only enable each region to produce one weekly half-hour programme, the regional manager was to be given complete editorial control: 'He [the Regional Television Manager] has been given only one directive; he must tailor his material to meet the needs of his local audience'<sup>5</sup> and, while 'identifying' with the audience might not be the only consideration when deciding what programmes should be made, Beech continued, 'it must become an integral part of the thinking of all those who work in regional television'<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Patrick Beech, 'New Dimensions in Regional Broadcasting' *BBC Lunch-time Lectures Eighth Series(5)*, (London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1970), 3

<sup>2</sup> Leeds-based TV producer Barney Colehan speaking on *Look North* in 1971 on the twentieth anniversary of the opening of the BBC's Holme Moss transmitter.

<sup>3</sup> Beech's lunch-time lecture took place at Broadcasting House, London on March 19 1970.

<sup>4</sup> The context for these changes, following on from *Broadcasting in the Seventies*, is discussed in chapter two.

<sup>5</sup> Beech, 'New Dimensions in Regional Broadcasting', 12.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

Dave Russell points to the dual role played by culture in the construction of place identity, both by providing ways of experiencing the place itself – ‘being there’ - or by giving rise to ‘the representations that carry and embellish the myths upon which identities are built’.<sup>7</sup> Yorkshire broadcasters certainly had ‘myths’ relating to the county’s representation and self-definition to draw upon when required. Stuart Rawnsley notes that in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, ‘alone of all the counties, Yorkshire is allocated a section on the characteristics of its people’.<sup>8</sup> But the television region was defined by transmitter reach, and, even editorially, the BBC’s new ‘North Region’, based in Leeds, included Lincolnshire and parts of Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire.

Identifying ‘cultural space’ as being ‘probably the most important site of regional projection’ in North East England, Natasha Vall claims that after 1945 both independent television and the BBC played an important part in ‘both shaping and representing regional culture’.<sup>9</sup> Certainly her argument that cultural patronage moved from voluntary donors to national and state organizations would apply to BBC Radio Drama in Leeds in the 1960s but did regional television also carry on this role, both drawing from and contributing to what might be described as a distinctly regional ‘cultural capital’?

This chapter will focus on the television ‘feature’ programmes, usually thirty minutes in length, made in Leeds for the region between 1971 and 1990. Beginning with an overview, it will go on to discuss how these programmes defined the region through imagery and representation, the portrayal of the past, the experience of change and its cultural life. As it has been necessary for the purposes of discussion to single out individual programmes, a list of the television features made in this period has been provided as an appendix to this dissertation.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Dave Russell, ‘Culture and formation of northern English identities from c.1850’ in B.Lancaster, D. Newton, D. and N. Vall, N (eds.) *An Agenda for Regional History* ( Newcastle Upon Tyne: Northumbria University Press, 2007), 275.

<sup>8</sup> Stuart Rawnsley, ‘Constructing the North: Space and a Sense of Place’ in N. Kirk (ed.), *Northern Identities: Historical Interpretations of the North and Northerness* (Aldershot: Aldergate Publishing, 2000), 138.

<sup>9</sup> Vall, *Cultural region*, 3-4.

<sup>10</sup> See Appendix Three below



## Programme Overview

Despite the region's editorial reach,<sup>11</sup> the very first programme's 'Yorkshireness' was proclaimed in its title. *Savile's Yorkshire Travels: My Yorkshire* promoted both the county and its presenter and was billed in the *Radio Times* as 'starring' Jimmy Savile with 'the People of Yorkshire as its cast'.<sup>12</sup> Whereas in 1963 the *Radio Times* had introduced the Leeds-born presenter to its readership as 'a Manchester favourite',<sup>13</sup> now Savile's regional identity could be emphasized. It should be noted here that most of the interviews undertaken for the present study were recorded before the autumn of 2012 when Savile's history of sexual abuse was publicly revealed. But in 2011, speaking about the region's first feature series, producer Doug Smith explained: 'We thought we'd better kick off with a popular series and we knew that Jimmy Savile was from Leeds, and he was fortunately persuaded to come and present programmes.'<sup>14</sup> This first regional programme borrowed not only the name but made use of the format established by the Radio One show, *Savile's Travels*. A second series followed in the same year, and Savile was soon back on the BBC North screen with *Jimmy Savile and Friends*,<sup>15</sup> another Yorkshire celebration with 'Yorkshire's liveliest inhabitant'<sup>16</sup> talking to well-known people from the county. This experiment was not repeated; instead another successful Savile radio format was adapted, *Savile's Yorkshire Speak Easy* transmitted between 1976<sup>17</sup> and 1980. But sometimes regional programme ideas were adopted by the BBC nationally, and producer Doug Smith wonders whether this may have led to the network *Jim'll Fix It* series 'because some people in London saw some of these programmes and thought it was a good idea'.<sup>18</sup> Certainly

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<sup>11</sup> See chapter two for the reach of the BBC North television region after 1968.

<sup>12</sup> Transmitted by BBC North 6 April 1971; *Radio Times*, w/b April 3 1971, 37

<sup>13</sup> Asa Briggs, *The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom: Volume V: Competition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 508n

<sup>14</sup> Smith, interview.

<sup>15</sup> The series was transmitted in December 1972 and January 1973

<sup>16</sup> *Radio Times* w/b 30 December 1973, 29

<sup>17</sup> The first programmes were originally to be produced by Roy Trevivien who had produced the radio *Speak Easy* series, *Yorkshire Ridings*, 12 (Winter 1975/1976), 92-93.

<sup>18</sup> *Any Questions* from Bristol and *The Archers* from Birmingham are frequently cited in this context.

Savile did not hesitate to tell people he encountered on screen in his BBC North programmes that he was giving them the opportunity to be TV stars. But at the time when he was presenting BBC North's first regional feature programmes, Savile was also a member of the BBC's North Advisory Council,<sup>19</sup> a role which he seems to have taken seriously. Reporter and producer David Seymour remembers Savile frequently calling in to the studios with notes he had made on the station's programmes.<sup>20</sup>



**Figure 12:** The first TV feature programme made by the BBC in Leeds was promoted in the *Radio Times* as an adaptation of Jimmy Savile's popular radio show; the author of the article was a member of the TV programme's production team.

Nor was Jimmy Savile the only member of the Advisory Council to regularly present regional programmes. Professor Patrick Nuttgens, the new region's Advisory Council's first Chair, had originally been introduced to the Corporation by his friend, radio drama producer Alfred Bradley. The BBC had asked Nuttgens for his opinion on the controversy surrounding the proposed redevelopment of York and a series for schools followed.<sup>21</sup> By the late 1960s Nuttgens was a regular contributor to both television and radio. Appointed as the first Director of Leeds

<sup>19</sup> *BBC Handbook 1971*, 156. Savile left the Council before the compilation of the 1973 Handbook.

<sup>20</sup> Seymour, interview.

<sup>21</sup> Patrick Nuttgens, *The Art of Learning: A Personal Journey* (Lewes: The Book Guild, 2000), 210

Polytechnic, situated across the road from the BBC's new regional TV studio, he was frequently engaged to present items relating to the built environment on *Look North*, going on to make regular appearances in studio programmes and writing and presenting many film documentaries for the region. Another regular presenter was gardener Geoffrey Smith whose Friday evening appearances on *Look North* may have led to his subsequent broadcasting career - he presented his first feature for BBC North in 1975 around the time he was beginning to find fame as a national broadcaster.<sup>22</sup> However, Geoffrey Smith continued to be a familiar face around the BBC Leeds studio, presenting film series and acting as the resident expert on the long running studio series, *Gardeners' Direct Line*.<sup>23</sup>

Sid Perou was working as a technician at the BBC's Ealing film studio when the BBC wanted to make a programme on cave rescue<sup>24</sup> but it became apparent that not only would it be impossible to do an underground OB but it would also be difficult to use standard film techniques. Perou, an enthusiastic caver who had been asked to go up to the Dales as a consultant and sound recordist, ended up filming all the underground scenes. Deciding that he wanted to continue making caving films,<sup>25</sup> Perou's decision to go freelance and move to Yorkshire in 1969 also coincided with the creation of the new BBC region and he was to make films on caving, climbing, micro-lighting, ballooning and mountain rescue dogs, winning many awards for BBC North. Doug Smith, who produced almost all of the films Perou made for the BBC, believes the region was 'very fortunate' to have been able to make use of both Perou's ideas and his ability to film where others were unable to venture. But for a programme to succeed it also had to be well-written by 'not just a hack journalist but a really good writer,

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<sup>22</sup> Smith, interview; A six-part series *Food For Thought* was transmitted by BBC North in 1975; Geoffrey Smith's first network series *Mr Smith's Vegetable Garden* was transmitted in 1976

<sup>23</sup> Regular panelist Daphne Ledward was also a member of the region's Advisory Council, *BBC Handbook 1986*, 268

<sup>24</sup> In 1967 an OB showing the ascent of the Old Man of Hoy attracted 15million viewers, accessed 7 February 2012, [http://www.bbc.co.uk/scotland/greatclimb/sec3\\_pg3.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/scotland/greatclimb/sec3_pg3.shtml).

<sup>25</sup> Sid Perou interviewed by Martin Baines. 2010 for the British Caving Library, accessed 7 February 2012, <http://caving-library.org.uk/audio/selected.php?id=166>.

someone who could do a drama if necessary'.<sup>26</sup> Although other writers were tried - Bill Grundy wrote Perou's film *What a Way to Spend a Sunday* while working at Granada TV - Brian Thompson was the most frequently used writer on film projects throughout the period.

Thompson was one of the writers nurtured by drama producer Alfred Bradley and regional TV staff were happy to make use of the expertise which already existed at the BBC in Leeds ranging from *Gardeners' Question Time* producer Ken Ford to TV Light Entertainment producer Barney Colehan who could advise on anything relating to the region's night life and suggest studio guests. In the 1950s Colehan had created and produced *Top Town*, first for radio and then for television, and when the regions were given a second weekly opt-out programme in 1976, BBC Leeds decided to launch the slot with a regional *Top Town* series. Former Leeds-based radio drama producer Alan Ayckbourn was given his first opportunity to direct television by the region; *Men on Women on Men* (1979) and *Deadly Virtues* (1984) were musical 'revues' he had created originally for the Stephen Joseph Theatre in Scarborough. But, at the same time, in the early years of feature production there seems to have been a tendency to try out presenters from elsewhere rather than make use of the regional TV team. A 1971 series on the Common Market was presented by the BBC Northern Industrial Correspondent Harold Webb, a 1974 current affairs series was fronted by former BBC news journalist Reg Alliss and *Northern Gardeners' Question Time* (1973) was chaired by *Today* presenter John Timpson. However, *Look North* reporter David Seymour was able to make an early move into the presentation and then production of studio programmes<sup>27</sup> and, in time, other reporters were also given the chance, an opportunity that might have been particularly welcome if, like Seymour, they were employed on a freelance basis.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Smith, interview.

<sup>27</sup> According to Doug Smith, this was because, in addition to himself, another features producer 'from ITV' had been appointed but left almost immediately and Seymour was asked to take over.

<sup>28</sup> Seymour, interview.

To understand why programmes were made, consideration has to be given to the production process. The first TV feature programme, *Savile's Yorkshire Travels*, was live and probably survives only because it must have been seen as a significant event in the station's history. Working with film was both expensive and time-consuming but video tape, before the arrival of more portable cameras, was much more limited out on location and difficult to edit. In addition to the time spent gathering material and in the cutting room, a thirty-minute film might involve processing, printing and negative-cutting by outside firms as well as sound dubbing elsewhere in the BBC.<sup>29</sup> In contrast there was no cost for using the region's own TV studio and the opening of purpose built premises in 1974 had provided producers with a much better studio space.<sup>30</sup> The wide variety of studio programmes made during this period included music and dance, gardening, current affairs and discussion, interviews with regional personalities and panel shows which followed well-established BBC formats but with varying degrees of regional relevance. For example, although it made use of the region's museum collections, *The Object in Question* was almost certainly based on the popular BBC series *Animal, Vegetable, Mineral* while *Gardeners' Direct Line* was based on radio's *Gardeners' Question Time* and easily transferred to the network daytime TV schedule in 1987. However, *Lifelines* – 'a programme where we put to the test the stranger than true techniques used to process a person's character', these being palmistry, astrology and graphology<sup>31</sup> - was created in Leeds although it did borrow in part from *What's My Line*; each week, in addition to featuring two well-known personalities ranging in the course of several series from Sheffield comedienne Marti Caine to miners' leader Arthur

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<sup>29</sup> See below, chapter six, for a more detailed discussion of work practices at the BBC in Leeds. An overview of television film production processes is provided by John Burder, *The technique of editing 16mm film*. London: Focal Press, 1979.

<sup>30</sup> When the BBC moved away from its Woodhouse Lane site in 2004, the new TV studio was considerably smaller in size reflecting the change in the range of programmes produced in Leeds.

<sup>31</sup> *Lifelines*, BBC North 1978.

Scargill, the panel was also introduced to a member of the public whose occupation they had to guess.<sup>32</sup>

From 1979 the BBC Leeds TV team were also obliged to make use of the Manchester-based LMCR (Lightweight Mobile Colour Recorder OB unit), a facility and crew it shared with both Manchester and Newcastle. The North West was already using the LMCR to profile places from around its region in the series *Home Ground* presented by Brian Redhead; east of the Pennines this readily translated into *Hometown* presented by *Look North* reporter Ken Cooper. As well as lightweight cameras, the LMCR recorded on to one-inch videotape (VT) which was not only much cheaper but had greater editing capabilities than the two-inch 'Quad' tape the BBC had been using since the 1960s.<sup>33</sup> The acquisition of a pair of one-inch VT machines and the appointment of in-house VT editors gave Leeds programme staff more control over OBs and more ambitious programmes could be contemplated both in the studio and out on the road.

While use of the LMCR unit made it easier to portray localities across the region, the towns visited in the two *Hometown* series show a clear preference for Yorkshire subjects: fourteen in Yorkshire, two each in Lincolnshire and Derbyshire.<sup>34</sup> It is not really surprising that feature producers more frequently looked to Yorkshire with its much greater population and acreage,<sup>35</sup> its big cities and major conurbations and its two national parks. Nor was this just a BBC problem; Graham Ironside, Controller of Regional Programmes at YTV between 1968 and 1995 remembers: 'Richard Whiteley used to call the region "Calendar-land" which I hated, but it was a

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<sup>32</sup> The four series of *Lifelines* (38 programmes in all) were transmitted in 1978, 1980 and 1982.

<sup>33</sup> With one-inch 'C' format videotape it was possible to still-frame, picture-shuttle and use both fast and slow motion.

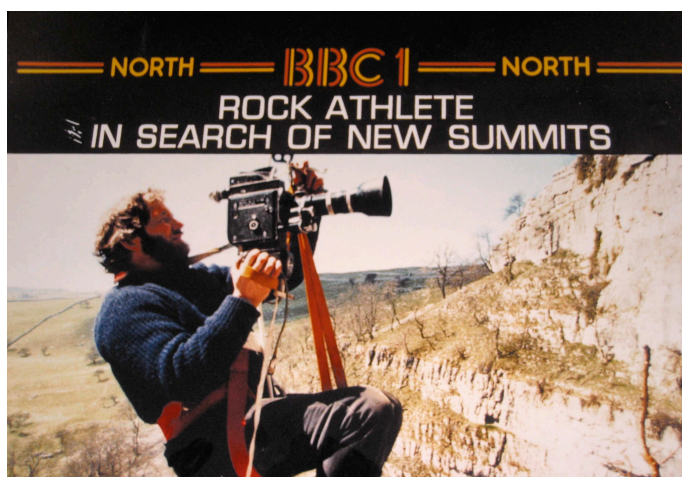
<sup>34</sup> See Appendix Three

<sup>35</sup> In 1971 the population of Yorkshire was 5,053,989 and its area was 3,918,656 acres; Lincolnshire had a population of 809,148 and 1,704,110 acres. Source: <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/census/1991-and-earlier-censuses/census-bicentenary/area-monitors/regions/yorkshire/index.html>, <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/census/1991-and-earlier-censuses/census-bicentenary/area-monitors/regions/lincolnshire/index.html>, accessed 12 January 2012.

fair attempt to give it a togetherness which otherwise was impossible.<sup>36</sup> Certainly YTV was happy to use the *Calendar* tag for regional series varying in subject from fashion to politics. Their BBC counterparts lacked even this means of title identification; where series titles were employed the only geographical identification that could be used was ‘north’.<sup>37</sup>



**Figure 13:** Freelance cameraman Sid Perou with producer Doug Smith. Perou brought ideas for new projects to the BBC in Leeds (photo courtesy of Doug Smith).



**Figure 14:** Sid Perou featured in a BBC presentation caption for *Rock Athlete*, BBC North, May 1980.

(Source: author’s collection)

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<sup>36</sup> Graham Ironside, email to author, 5 February 2012; Richard Whiteley, *Himoff! The Memoirs of a TV Matinee Idol*, (London: Orion, 2000) 122.

<sup>37</sup> *Look North Reports*, *Up North* and *Close Up North*. In the 1990s *Close Up North* was used as the series title for all regular opt-out features made in Leeds, Newcastle and Manchester.

## Regional imagery, representation and myth

The emphasis on Yorkshire in *Savile's Yorkshire Travels: My Yorkshire*<sup>38</sup> was possibly a way of declaring to the audience that the programme had not been made in London or in Manchester but in Leeds. The region's 'Yorkshireness' is epitomized both by its landscape and its people. The studio audience has been provided by the West Ardsley Townswomen's Guild and the programme's guests - aristocrat George Howard,<sup>39</sup> industrialist Jim Shaw and football referee Arthur Ellis - are introduced by Savile as 'first-class Yorkshiremen', alongside sequences illustrating his own Yorkshire roots. Having set the scene in the studio, the programme cuts to Savile in Leeds city centre asking shoppers what they think of Yorkshire people and how Yorkshire compares with Lancashire. Shaw, who is referred to as 'Mr Wool', is asked for his views on how 'Yorkshire people shape up to other people' and he and Savile agree that there seems to be less industrial strife in Yorkshire than in the rest of the country. Later the panel are asked whether Yorkshire is on the way up or on the way down: Howard is reassured by the amount of reclamation work going on in the industrial West Riding; Ellis, citing recent achievements by regional clubs, explains why he has never been so proud of Yorkshire sport, but for Shaw the answer lies in the 'character' of Yorkshire's inhabitants:

I believe in the character of Yorkshire people. We've been through difficult times before and always we've come out because we've been brought up the hard way. I'm quite sure with the character of our people we can come through everything all the time. I don't care whether it's sport - Arthur Ellis - or whether it's farming, whatever it may be. I have a great confidence in the future of our county and our young people.

But - as portrayed in the programme – Savile's description of the Yorkshire character is warmer. What, Savile asks, can be 'as Yorkshire as fish and chips?' answering his question by visiting fish frier, and 'really true Yorkshire spirit', Aunty Nora. When he gets her to attribute gender to

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<sup>38</sup> BBC North, 6 April 1971

<sup>39</sup> Howard was appointed to the BBC's Board of Governors in February 1972 and became its Chairman in 1980 (Briggs, *Competition*, 975n)



the pieces of fish she is frying, the audience is reminded, if they were ever in any doubt, that this is Savile's very personal take on Yorkshire and indeed the world.

This is also reflected in the way the programme uses the Yorkshire landscape - a montage at its beginning includes Savile at Ilkley's Cow and Calf rocks hand-in-hand with a young woman, a brief shot and the pit wheel at the West Yorkshire colliery where he was a Bevin Boy, before lingering on his 'beloved' Scarborough. As he walks around the harbour he reflects on the region, 'all the hills, the people and from the silence to the sounds'. The montage concludes with Savile shown in the midst of music and dancing, a reminder of his role on national television as presenter of *Top of the Pops*. But while the studio audience might agree with Savile that they would not want to live anywhere else, Savile has to reassure viewers that his vision of Yorkshire is inclusive:

Even though it's a Yorkshire programme this, and we start talking about Yorkshire countryside and people and things like that, we don't want to get so introverted that we'd want to think that everybody else is not right because this is a great welcoming county and we want to welcome everybody to it... We've got plenty of space, we've got plenty of room and we've got plenty of big hearts and that's what we want.

But the image of fish and chips is associated as much with working class communities as with Yorkshire<sup>40</sup> and, even to their own, Yorkshire people might not have always been as welcoming as Savile suggested.

This is the theme explored in *Miners on the Move* made in 1981 at a time when miners' families were relocating from South Yorkshire to the new Selby coalfield. The programme begins with a miner's wife observing: 'I think they are going to think that we're mucky' and characterised by 'flat caps, pigeons and whippets which we're not.'<sup>41</sup> While there is no suggestion that these words were in any way scripted, they may have been a response to a question from the producer or reporter. The film's commentary in denying that such images still prevailed (voiced over archive shots of miners on the way to the pit) may even have emphasized

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<sup>40</sup> See John K. Walton, *Fish & Chips and the British Working Class 1870-1940*, (London: Leicester University Press, 1992)

<sup>41</sup> *Miners on the Move*, BBC North, 26 May 1981

such perceptions: ‘They’ve also come to accept that [the image of] miners in cloth caps and with constantly coal-blackened faces is outdated, a throwback to the time when coal-mining was a lowly primitive business relying wholly on the pick and shovel’. Elsewhere the narrator refers to the incoming miners as an ‘industrial army’. The programme reports that an attempt to integrate housing has been overturned and, while the leader of the council hopes the newcomers ‘will enjoy our pleasant way of life’, a miner looking forward to a new future in Selby hopes the host community will see that miners are the same as everybody else.

While in *Savile’s Travels* a cohesive regional identity had been defined both by the personality of the presenter and that of the Yorkshire people, a feature made in the same year emphasized the ‘Yorkshireness’ of its subject in both its title, *Harvey Smith, Yorkshireman*<sup>42</sup> and *Radio Times* billing:

His credentials as a Yorkshireman are impeccable - the film was made in and around his home high on Ilkley Moor itself. This humorous hard-bitten tyke developed his argument that he’s become the world’s best show-jumping rider because he was born and bred on the broad acres.<sup>43</sup>

This was one of three programmes focusing on the ‘character and motivation of Yorkshire’s most successful sportsmen’.<sup>44</sup> In Leeds the *Radio Times* billings were written by producers<sup>45</sup> and the impression of Harvey Smith given here seems to reinforce the ‘Yorkshire self-image’ which, according to Dave Russell, evolved between 1860 and 1939:

Yorkshire people were supposedly rough-mannered, brusque and blunt, if ultimately homely and hospitable, and with a strong sense of community obligation; naturally egalitarian to a considerable degree; canny and thrifty but generous in a crisis; hard-working, practical, temperate and phlegmatic; blessed with a dry wit; suspicious of strangers; competitive, with a hatred of losing, although never actually unsporting; and perhaps above all else, fiercely independent.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> BBC North, 15 December 1971

<sup>43</sup> *Radio Times*, 15 December 1971, 44

<sup>44</sup> *Radio Times*, 30 November 30, 49

<sup>45</sup> Smith, interview.

<sup>46</sup> Dave Russell, ‘Sport and Identity: The Case of Yorkshire County Cricket Club, 1890-1939’, *Twentieth Century British History* 7, 2 (1996), 214.

The series also focused on another professional Yorkshireman, cricketer Geoffrey Boycott, as well as tennis player Roger Taylor, but in Taylor's case the *Radio Times* billing hinted at a degree of negativity that was also part of the Yorkshire self-image.<sup>47</sup>

His mother who taught him tennis on the parks of Sheffield remembers that many people in Yorkshire were more discomfited than pleased by his success. The steelworker's son returns to his native county to talk over 20 years in tennis with John Burns...<sup>48</sup>

Sportsmen were not the only personalities to be closely associated with Yorkshire and the station had already made use of its new programme-making opportunities to film interviews with writers J.B. Priestley and Phyllis Bentley.<sup>49</sup> Both had long literary careers and lives to reflect on, and the use of film suggests these may have been intended as legacy recordings, something that needed to be done while there was still time. Even if they had not seen Priestley's plays or read his novels, in 1971 viewers aged over forty-five might have remembered his wartime broadcasts and, although Bentley was no longer in fashion as a novelist, *Inheritance*, produced in Leeds for radio in 1946, had been made into a successful television series by Granada in 1967. But, despite their common West Yorkshire origins, the difference between the two authors was clear; Priestley, remembering with 'nostalgia' his early years in Bradford from his Warwickshire home, also talks about his 'impact on political thought'<sup>50</sup> while Bentley, billed as a 'West Riding novelist' and still living in Halifax, 'recalls a life moulded by the mills and moors of Yorkshire'.<sup>51</sup> Bentley identifies herself with one part of Yorkshire, 'the West Riding is my country', but is happy to talk about recent phenomena such as long hair and the new Pennine motorway.<sup>52</sup> Perhaps less easy to explain was the time given to the memoirs of Jim Bullock, a founding member of the British Association of Colliery Management, who was the subject of

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<sup>47</sup> See Marshall, *The Creation of Yorkshireness*, 36 and *in passim* for a discussion on the origins and evolution of Yorkshire stereotypes.

<sup>48</sup> *Radio Times*, 7 December 1971

<sup>49</sup> *Thinking Back: J.B. Priestley*, 7 September 1971; *Thinking Back: Phyllis Bentley*, 17 September 1971.

<sup>50</sup> *Radio Times*, 7 September 1971, 5

<sup>51</sup> *Radio Times*, 17 September 1971, 46

<sup>52</sup> *ibid.*, 5

four programmes in one year.<sup>53</sup> Having started as a pit-boy at Allerton Bywater near Castleford, Bullock went on to become a colliery manager, landowner and farmer, experiences he had already reflected on in a series of radio conversations in 1968<sup>54</sup> and a programme made by Yorkshire Television in the following year.<sup>55</sup> It may have been Bullock's ability to depict the life of coal miners and their communities which led BBC North to commission not only a studio interview following the publication of his autobiography in 1972<sup>56</sup> but another three films later in the year and a further programme, *The Boy From Bowers Row*, in 1975 but, with 82,400 employed in the industry in the Yorkshire Region in 1971,<sup>57</sup> this also reflected the significant role that coal mining still played in the region's economy.

Very occasionally producers did seek people who were in some way stereotypical. Douglas Smith, looking for subjects who led contrasting lives for a 1975 series, *The Way it is With Me*, remembers thinking, 'I'll try and find someone who is really back to the time when people in the north were supposed to go for whippets and pigeons, or going fishing and all that sort of thing'.<sup>58</sup> Sheffield's Ernest Pickering did keep pigeons but, like Jim Bullock, he was a good talker and, as he worked as a 'little mester',<sup>59</sup> his experiences would have been different from that of most viewers. Pickering was also to feature in future programmes and, for Doug Smith, finding such people was one of the strengths of regional television:

One of the earliest ones I did was a chap called Mackenzie Thorpe. He was a wildfowler in the Lincolnshire Wash and a remarkable man really, very much the sort of chap who understood nature and he lived on a houseboat on the saltings of the Wash, and what I found he could do

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<sup>53</sup> *One Miner's Triumph*, BBC North, 4 April 1972, followed in August 1972 by *A Collier's Tale*, a three-part series featuring "more anecdotes" from Bullock (*Radio Times*, 8 August 1972, 4).

<sup>54</sup> The four-part series *Conversations with Jim Bullock* was transmitted by Radio 4 in December 1968

<sup>55</sup> *Miner Extraordinary*, Yorkshire Television, 22 July 1969.

<sup>56</sup> James Bullock, *Them and Us: History of the Mining Industry* (London: Souvenir Press, 1972) This ability was demonstrated by the extent to which later writers and historians were to draw from his later memoir, *Bowers Row: Recollections of a Mining Village* published in 1976

<sup>57</sup> 'Table 1: Total Male Employment in Coal Mining', Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, *Updating Coalfield Areas*, 2003, accessed 3 April 2012, (<http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/regeneration/pdf/131272.pdf>)

<sup>58</sup> Smith, interview.

<sup>59</sup> In Sheffield self-employed craftsmen who made cutlery and tools using traditional methods were known as 'little mesters'.

which was rather interesting, was that he could call hares and the hares would run right up to him.<sup>60</sup>

The wildfowler had been the subject of a documentary made by Anglia Television in 1961 and of a biography published in the following year,<sup>61</sup> but having previously visited Thorpe for a *Look North* item, it was decided to retell the story of this poacher-turned-naturalist in two thirty-minute films.<sup>62</sup> In the same year, BBC East, based in Norwich, also made a programme about Mackenzie Thorpe,<sup>63</sup> an indication of the limitations resulting from transmitter-defined regions when it came to reflecting regional identity.



**Figure 15:** Film cameraman Keith Massey, sound recordist Ken Evans and reporter Barrie Chambers on location in Lincolnshire with Mackenzie Thorpe

(Source: courtesy, Doug Smith)

Studio-based series of one-to-one interviews emphasised achievement but, of those featured, their degrees of connection to the region varied considerably.<sup>64</sup> While the Yorkshire origins of an Eddie Waring could be easily recognized, other interviewees were selected because they were living in the region at the time or because of the roles they occupied: three university Vice Chancellors, the Archbishop of York and the Vicar of Leeds. Politicians, entertainers and

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<sup>60</sup> Smith, interview.

<sup>61</sup> *Countryman: Mackenzie Thorpe: Lincolnshire Poacher*, Anglia TV, 30 May 1982, East Anglian Film Archive, accessed 21 April 2012, <http://www.eafa.org.uk/catalogue/87211>; Colin Willock, *Kenzie: The wild-goose man* (London: Andre Deutsch 1962)

<sup>62</sup> *Mackenzie Thorpe: Lincolnshire Poacher*, BBC North, 15 February 1972; *Mackenzie Thorpe: From Gun to Camera*, BBC North, 22 February 1972.

<sup>63</sup> *On Camera: Kenzie the Wild Goose Man*, BBC East, East Anglian Film Archive, accessed 21 April 2012, <http://www.eafa.org.uk/catalogue/330>.

<sup>64</sup> There were ten series of interviews: *Summer Interview* (1975), *In Conversation* (1977), *It Seems Like Yesterday* (1979), *In Conversation* (1979), *Success Story* (1981), *One Plus One* (1982, 1983), *A Chance to Meet* (1984), *In Conversation* (1985), *Talking from Experience* (1987). See Appendix Three for the list of interviewees.

sportsmen, and even a football manager's wife, were featured although very few women appeared.<sup>65</sup> For most contributors, the regional connection was with its Yorkshire heartland and, in the case of writers, the first question often related to the extent to which they considered themselves to be 'northern'. Thus Alan Bennett is introduced as: 'A playwright who has drawn on his northern background for much of his work which is not surprising as he was born and brought up in Armley when it was a back-to-back district of Leeds'.<sup>66</sup> While Bennett says he does not consider himself to be a 'northern writer' but rather one who has been influenced by various relatives, he is happy to follow the theme - at one point he quotes from his 'northern writer spoof' where the 'writer' talks about his Doncaster origins and there being 'all miners in our family. Under the skin I'm a miner...I'm a minor writer.'<sup>67</sup> Bennett declares he has nothing of interest to say about his Leeds childhood but clips from BBC versions of his plays, and the ensuing discussion, emphasize his connection to both Leeds and Yorkshire and, when referring to a play of his which 'flopped' in London, he states that audiences there would not view it in the same way as those in Leeds.<sup>68</sup> Nevertheless, Bennett's 'success' was here being defined with reference to his national fame.



**Figure 16:** Playwright Alan Bennett from Leeds tells his *Success Story* to Mike Smartt

(Source: still frame, *Success Story: Alan Bennett*, BBC North, May 8 1981.)

<sup>65</sup> Elsie Revie, wife of Leeds United manager Don Revie, 1979; Clare Venables, theatre director, 1982; Fanny Waterman, founder of the Leeds International Pianoforte Competition, 1983; Marti Caine, comedienne, 1984; Elizabeth North, novelist, 1985.

<sup>66</sup> *Success Story*, BBC North, 8 May 1981.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.* Originally performed for *Monitor*, Bennett also points out that the recording was not kept by the BBC.

<sup>68</sup> The Halifax cyclists and Yorkshire landmarks in *A Day Out*, the Leeds setting for *Sunset Across the Bay*.

But people with regional connections had also to be found for panel shows and studio discussion programmes, and the landscape itself was almost always mediated through a presenter. The task facing Senior Features Producer Doug Smith was to find a ‘way of looking at the landscape and also seeing what went on in that part of the world’.<sup>69</sup> Given that Yorkshire, alone, had many different landscapes the personal journey often provided a means to explore the visual imagery of the region. An early solution was to focus on places associated with four rivers, each with a different presenter. *A View of Upper Calderdale* was presented by ‘dalesman and social historian’ Professor Bernard Jennings while radio broadcaster and canoeist Neville Powley shared his enthusiasm for the River Witham in Lincolnshire.<sup>70</sup> As time went on it was more usual to have the same presenter throughout the series - gardener Geoffrey Smith ‘stepped out’ to walk in Yorkshire (three programmes), Derbyshire and Lincolnshire<sup>71</sup> while poet Pete Morgan travelled across the region by barge and boat.<sup>72</sup> In an earlier programme Morgan had ridden a white stallion along a stretch of the Yorkshire coast near to his home in Robin Hood’s Bay, an experience which, according to fellow poet Ian McMillan, was also to provide Morgan with new poems displaying ‘a muscularity of language that reflects the harsh moorscapes and seascapes around the village’.<sup>73</sup>

One film, though, took an approach whose origins may have owed more to art school and the city symphony film genre than to any other feature produced in the region;<sup>74</sup> *Scarborough Bank Holiday* documents a spring bank holiday in the resort from dawn to dusk without using any voiced narrative.<sup>75</sup> The film only departs from its actuality soundtrack to include a brief

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<sup>69</sup> Smith, interview.

<sup>70</sup> *A View of Upper Calderdale*, BBC North 15 October 1974, *A View of the Witham*, BBC North, 29 October 1974. The other programmes in the series featured Upper Wensleydale and Upper Wharfedale.

<sup>71</sup> *Mr Smith Steps Out*, a series of five programmes transmitted by BBC TV North in 1977

<sup>72</sup> *Voyage Between Two Seas* (1983); *The Grain Run* (1985)

<sup>73</sup> *Between the Heather and the Sea*, BBC North, 12 May 1982; Ian McMillan, ‘Obituary: Pete Morgan’, *Yorkshire Post*, 9 July 2010, accessed 1 October 2011, <http://www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/news/community/obituaries/pete-morgan-1-2580766>

<sup>74</sup> *Berlin: Symphony of a Metropolis* (1927) set the fashion.

<sup>75</sup> *Scarborough Bank Holiday*, BBC North, 10 September 1976

interview with violinist and regular Scarborough performer Max Jaffa who explains that people probably visit the resort ‘because it’s just such a jolly nice place’ with ‘lovely audiences’ who, as the film suggests, are from different parts of Yorkshire. But shots of trawlers, overlaid by a local radio broadcast referring to the ongoing Cod War with Iceland as well as a news bulletin referring to traffic queues and accidents, hint that there may be more to the story than is being shown here. And television could also give new life to an old format. Sid Perou’s film about a microlight competition, *Rally in the Sky*,<sup>76</sup> was accompanied by a script - written and narrated by reporter Ken Cooper - which made much of the landmarks on the ground: Brimham Rocks, Fountains and Rievaulx abbeys, the ‘utterly timeless’ Ripon Cathedral, Newby Hall, the White Horse of Kilburn and on to Scarborough and Flamborough Head. While this was one way of making what was happening in the air more relevant to the audience, most of these locations had appeared in *Land of the White Rose* made for the London and North Eastern Railway Company in 1934. But landscape was never depicted entirely for its own sake. Jimmy Savile’s particular take on the Yorkshire myth had been used to proclaim that the region was now producing its own feature programmes and ‘Yorkshireness’, while ignoring those parts of the region which were not part of that county, did provide a useful if archaic stereotype for identifying with potential viewers, the majority of whom did live in Yorkshire..

## **History and heritage**

By the 1970s it was probable that at least some part of the audience’s knowledge of both national and regional history had been mediated by television. However, it was film shot before the advent of that medium which was to provide BBC Leeds producers with a rich and, until then, largely untapped source of material and the first programmes specifically looking back at

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<sup>76</sup> *Rally in the Sky*, BBC North 23 January 1987.



the past were archive compilations. The opening words of *They're Pulling Down Memory Lane* (1973) suggest that an alternative to the prevailing historical narrative was being presented:

These are scenes of apparently unimportant streets, and what the smart alecks call faceless people. In these tiny snatches of film you are watching what happened when a local cameraman recorded some subject he knew was only of local interest but accidentally recorded a piece of your history. There are no shots of Downing Street or the Kremlin. All the film was taken up here, for your eyes only.<sup>77</sup>

And, despite being voiced over footage shot before most viewers were likely to have been born, there is a suggestion here of appealing to - or seeking to create - a collective memory. According to producer Patrick Taggart these archive-based productions originated in his friendship with film historian John Huntley and station manager Bill Greaves insisting that Brian Thompson be brought in to script and narrate the programmes after the film had been roughly assembled in the cutting room.<sup>78</sup> Although the aim of such series in bringing previously unconnected stories together was to let the 'film speak for itself,'<sup>79</sup> the archive footage was accompanied by Brian Thompson's commentary. Appeals to 'Yorkshireness' and to hindsight were used to relate film of past events to the TV audience – although a Londoner, Thompson's comment on a newsreel showing Sheffield Wednesday success in a FA Cup Final was, 'No Yorkshireman needs telling these were the last of our lads to ever win at Wembley'.<sup>80</sup> But archive film compilations were also used to tell specific stories illustrating past regional achievements. The 1972 series *When Yorkshiremen Made Movies* showed that the region had a flourishing film production industry at the beginning of the twentieth century<sup>81</sup> while newsreel provided the basis for a film biography of Amy Johnson from Hull, the first woman to fly solo from England to Australia.<sup>82</sup> Taggart remembers that 'by now the phone was ringing, the mail arriving. It seemed that everybody had

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<sup>77</sup> *They're Pulling Down Memory Lane: Lincolnshire*, BBC North, 11 September 1973

<sup>78</sup> Patrick Taggart, email interview with author, 7 June 2011. Huntley worked at the BFI until 1974, 'Obituary: John Huntley', *Guardian* 11 August 2003, accessed 24 May 2012, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/news/2003/aug/11/guardianobituaries.obituaries>.

<sup>79</sup> Taggart, email.

<sup>80</sup> *Electric Picture Palace*, BBC North, April 18 1972

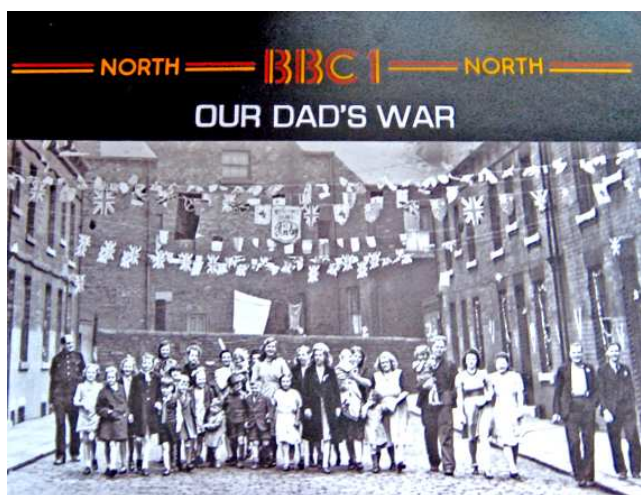
<sup>81</sup> *When Yorkshiremen Made Movies*. BBC North, 6,14,21 November 1972, with the first programme subtitled *It Started in Holmfirth*

<sup>82</sup> *Wonderful Amy*, BBC North, 2 October 1973

some archive film - libraries, private collectors, cinemas'.<sup>83</sup> And in 1975 a programme was put together from 'random bits of film' to mark the thirtieth anniversary of VE Day,<sup>84</sup> opening with words which again seemed to appeal to a collective regional memory even if in its denial:

The experience of total war is for most people a nostalgic memory. This is Sheffield in 1940, blitzed just before Christmas, quiet and stunned. Who now remembers landmines, stirrup pumps, and Anderson shelters? What was it like for Yorkshire people to fight the people's war?<sup>85</sup>

After all, this was *Our Dad's War*.



**Figure 17:** Appealing to a collective memory? Presentation caption, *Our Dad's War*, 1975.

(Source: author's collection)

In answering his own question, 'Why is so much television history about war?' Roger Smither has noted that not only are archive-based programmes relatively cheap to make but also 'that warfare offers one of the richest seams to mine in the world's film archives'.<sup>86</sup> And if the use of archive film had provided BBC Leeds feature producers with a successful formula then so did programmes relating to the two World Wars. In fact Patrick Taggart's (and the region's) first war history programme had not originated with archive film but with oral testimony rooted in a specific locality. Following a suggestion from Brian Thompson, Taggart and a film crew travelled back to the Somme battlefield with thirty members of the Bradford Pals Comradeship

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<sup>83</sup> Taggart, email.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> *Our Dad's War*:1, BBC North, 13 May 1975

<sup>86</sup> Roger Smither, 'Why is so much television history about war?' in David Cannadine (ed.) *History and the Media* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan 2004), 51-66

Association on what would probably be their last pilgrimage to France, the youngest being then 76.<sup>87</sup> The point was not lost on the region's press, the *Yorkshire Evening Post* commenting, 'Today, they [the Pals] are again contributing modestly to history - television history' and the *Bradford Telegraph and Argus* demanding that the programme should be shown at peak time, praising it for 'putting a Bradford disaster into its proper context'.<sup>88</sup> The film's commentary emphasized the Bradford origins of these men: 'Two battalions who had known each other from the same pubs, same mills, same football teams... Many of them had joined the army in the way they might join the brass band'. References were also made to the presence of the Leeds and Sheffield Pals and a 'Yorkshire death toll' of nine thousand.<sup>89</sup> The return of the veterans to the battlefield was also a news event with the programme's transmission approximately timed to coincide with the sixtieth anniversary of the outbreak of war.

Ten years later the same camera crew returned to France, this time with Yorkshire members of the Old Contemptibles Association,<sup>90</sup> and once again the regional origins of those taking part were emphasized as in the description of Messines Ridge as the 'killing ground to a generation of Yorkshiremen'. But the script also rooted itself in locality - veteran Edward Bilton was a 'lad from Methley' - while also indicating that the events described were of national and global significance: 'The date was Sunday August 23rd 1914. Lance Corporal George Rippon, 2nd Battalion King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry, had witnessed the first shots fired by the British army in the First World War'.<sup>91</sup> Producer Patrick Hargreaves believes it was his 'good fortune... to be able to record the memories of people who had gone through these traumatic events' and, recalling George Rippon saying he didn't think much of the programme, observes:

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<sup>87</sup> *Reunion*, BBC North, 23 September 1974

<sup>88</sup> *Yorkshire Evening Post*, 24 September 1974, *Telegraph and Argus*, 23 September 1974. It is likely that television history was indeed being made. Hanna has claimed that The Battle of the Somme, made two years later, was the first TV documentary to revisit the battlefield: Emma Hanna, 'Landscape and Memory: Television Representations of the Battle of the Somme' in E. Bell and A. Gray, *Televising History: Mediating the Past in Post-War Europe* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 110.

<sup>89</sup> *Reunion*, 23 September 1974.

<sup>90</sup> An association for surviving members of the British Expeditionary Force sent to France in 1914.

<sup>91</sup> *Very Exceptional Soldiers*, BBC North. 5 November 1974

‘Here’s me who grew up in the sixties talking to someone who had that life experience - it brings you down to size...What does it really matter? It’s a great object lesson in “it’s only television”’.<sup>92</sup>

By 1980 the Second World War was no longer being portrayed in BBC Leeds programmes as a collective regional experience but as a personal story with archive film again playing an important part. A wartime RAF training film following a Lancaster bomber crew before and on a night-time raid had been shown by the BBC in 1978, making it easier and cheaper for subsequent programmes to use the material. Producer Doug Smith remembers how, around the same time, he had come across a memoir by Jack Currie, a former bomber pilot living in the region who had also flown from its wartime airfields: ‘He was a very good speaker, a natural really because he had done a bit of acting’.<sup>93</sup> All of this, with a script by Brian Thompson, came together in *Lancaster Legend: The Pilot’s Story*<sup>94</sup> which won the Royal Television Society (RTS) Best Regional Programme Award in 1980, suggesting that this was a winning formula, and Currie went on to present more films for the region which focused on the war in the air. A line in the film *From Hull, Hell and Halifax*<sup>95</sup> even suggested that regional identity could be seen in terms of aircraft: ‘If Lincolnshire was Lancaster country, the Vale of York and as far north as the Tees was the home of the Halifax’. Such programmes give support to Roger Smither’s claim that the format for historical programmes has changed little in forty years, conforming ‘to the pattern of something that has visibly worked before’ which is then seen as the ‘best guarantee’ for success.<sup>96</sup> The extent to which these films were regional in focus is debatable but they were certainly fun to make; looking back at his BBC career Patrick Hargreaves says that ‘simple snapshots’ come to mind including flying in a Lancaster bomber.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Hargreaves, interview.

<sup>93</sup> Smith, interview,

<sup>94</sup> *Lancaster Legend: A Pilot’s Story*, BBC North, 25 February 1980

<sup>95</sup> *From Hull, Hell and Halifax*, BBC North, 25 September 1981

<sup>96</sup> Smither, ‘Why is so much television history about war?’ 51

<sup>97</sup> Hargreaves, interview.

Archive film was used across the regional output. A compilation put together to mark the Queen's Silver Jubilee asked, *Where Were You On Coronation Day?*<sup>98</sup> Film editor Bob Geoghegan believes that he was probably offered a job at the BBC in Leeds because, while in Birmingham, having discovered a collection of local newsreel film, he edited it into a programme for BBC Midlands.<sup>99</sup> But, despite archive film being used extensively in programmes, some of the region's own news film had already been discarded for reasons of space. Believing that this material would be of value in the future, Bob Geoghegan, together with the regional film librarian,<sup>100</sup> approached manager Bill Greaves with the idea that the film could be used to look back at one year in the region - 1971 was chosen as very little film from that year had been 'junked' and it was considered to be far away enough in time.<sup>101</sup> The programme was assembled in the cutting room and, using script and specially shot links, it was presented as writer Brian Thompson's personal view with Greaves acting as Executive Producer. While there is some reference to news events and to the changes the region was experiencing as well as to Don Revie's Leeds United, much of the film is taken up with light-hearted stories, mini-skirts and vox pops from Leeds Market on whether it is right to call someone 'love'. 'That was the first thing I had to learn when I first came to live in Leeds', Thompson tells his audience, once again including them in the project. Although this a personal view there is a promise of experiences shared in both 'my life and yours', as he and the audience look 'at some of these stories together'. Bob Geoghegan had proved his point and it was decided that in future all transmitted film material would be retained.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> *Where Were You On Coronation Day*, BBC North, 8 July 1977

<sup>99</sup> Geoghegan, interview.

<sup>100</sup> The author is credited in the programme as 'film researcher'.

<sup>101</sup> *Looking Back with Brian Thompson*, BBC North, 6 January 1982.

<sup>102</sup> This did not prevent news film footage from being lost in production as described in Chapter Three.



**Figure 18:** Still frame from *Looking Back with Brian Thompson*, 1982. Standing amongst the cans in the film library he remarks: ‘Inside of each can is a little bit of you and me’.

Events, particularly those involving endings, sometimes provided the opportunity for making programmes with nostalgic appeal. A programme was made in 1983 to mark the coming to the end of producer Barney Colehan’s long-running series, *The Good Old Days*,<sup>103</sup> and in 1988 the region also said farewell to Butlins’ holiday camp in Filey, but despite the presence of the City Varieties theatre in Leeds, these were national rather than regional stories. Producer Mark Rowland’s script for *Goodnight Campers* suggests that the Butlins’ experience was a manifestation of Britishness, commenting ‘only the British could have fallen for it’ and ‘the war had broken down barriers. British people were actually seen to talk to strangers and this was something British people thrived on’.<sup>104</sup>

And while the series *The Magic Lantern Show*, based on a collection of magic lantern slides, also ‘thrived’ on nostalgia, it was much more rooted in the region<sup>105</sup> while the chance discovery of a collection of glass negatives, a record of an Edwardian family, on a Wakefield market stall also led to a film, *Atkinson Huby*, and another Royal Television Society award.<sup>106</sup> That historians had come to question the pervasiveness of nostalgia - in 1974 TV historian Michael Wood had

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<sup>103</sup> *Goodbye to the Good Old Days*, 16 December 1983.

<sup>104</sup> *Goodnight Campers*, BBC North 9 December 1983

<sup>105</sup> *Magic Lantern Show*, BBC North 1983 and 1985; The slides belonged to Leeds University lecturer John Jones who also presented the programmes and was well known in the city: Steve Bell, ‘Obituary, John Jones’, *The Guardian* 23 December 2010, accessed March 30 2011, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2010/dec/23/john-jones-obituary>.

<sup>106</sup> *Atkinson Huby*, BBC North, 10 December 1976. Unusually the film was not only scripted but produced by freelancer Brian Thompson. It was ‘Highly Commended’ in the 1976 RTS awards.

described what he identified as the prevailing appetite for World War Two films and series like *Upstairs, Downstairs* and the *Forsyte Saga* as ‘a general abdication, an actual desertion from the present’<sup>107</sup> - would have been of little interest to BBC regional programme makers. Not only could old film and photos be reworked to suggest a collective past but such programmes often appealed to those involved in their production: videotape editor Andy Dobson describes *Magic Lantern Show* as ‘a nostalgia show that a lot of people liked’ although his personal favourite was *On Location*, an OB series visiting regional museums. Dobson remembers one programme from a Lincolnshire museum giving him a greater appreciation of life in the Fens, but such programmes also suggested the region’s diversity in the past.<sup>108</sup> An earlier series, *The Object in Question*, made in the studio, had also made use of the region’s museums using panels which included both regional ‘celebrities’ and curators - Bradford Museums’ Anthea Bickley told the *Radio Times*: ‘What we’re interested in is the paraphernalia of everyday life.’<sup>109</sup> Panellist and ‘guest curator’ Frank Atkinson had worked in Yorkshire museums before moving to County Durham and it is interesting to note that Robert Hewison has acknowledged that his involvement with BBC Newcastle’s programme on Atkinson, *The Man Who Made Beamish*, played some part in the development of his influential critique of the heritage industry,<sup>110</sup> and what he saw as the nation’s ‘obsession with the past’.

In pointing to the range of feature programmes made by BBC Leeds, regional manager Bill Greaves claims that the subjects were often obscure: ‘I once made a thirty-minute film...in a small church in York dealing with thirteenth century stained glass and the effects of light upon it

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<sup>107</sup> Michael Wood, ‘Nostalgia or Never: You Can’t Go Home Again’, *New Society*, 7 November 1974, 343-346. See also David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985) and Christopher Shaw and Malcolm Chase (eds.) *The Imagined Past: History and Nostalgia* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989).

<sup>108</sup> Andy Dobson, interview with the author, Leeds, 28 February 2012; *On Location: Lincolnshire Life*, 27 November 1981

<sup>109</sup> *Radio Times*, 15 October 1976. The presenters were not quite so regional, the 1973 series being presented by John Timpson and the 1976 series by Michael Aspel. Guests included Patrick Nuttgens and Brian Thompson

<sup>110</sup> Richard Hewison, *The Heritage Industry: Britain in a Climate of Decline* (London: Methuen, 1987) 12. *The Man Who Made Beamish*, BBC North East 1986, was presented by Hewison.

and the claustrophobia of the little church.<sup>111</sup> The film was written and narrated by Patrick Nuttgens who also presented programmes on the development of great Yorkshire cities (Leeds and York) and great Yorkshiremen of the past (furniture maker Thomas Chippendale and architect Cuthbert Broderick). ‘Living history’ with the English Civil War Society was featured in *Distracted Tymes* (1985) and West Yorkshire’s archaeological sites were visited in *A Future For Yorkshire’s Past*.<sup>112</sup> Although a drama-documentary on Sheffield gang warfare in the 1920s focused on events that were hardly the subject of regional pride, the history programmes produced in the region tended to focus on achievements.<sup>113</sup> And it is also necessary to ask whose history was being excluded - it was not until 2001 that a BBC North programme (made by an independent company) focused on the history of Bradford’s South Asian community<sup>114</sup> and the Caribbean community was also ignored although a two-part history of the Leeds Jewish community was made, probably reflecting the background of its producer.<sup>115</sup> With the exception of Patrick Taggart’s film about Amy Johnson and a programme made both for the region and the network about band leader Ivy Benson,<sup>116</sup> there was little mention of the history of women in the region and it is surely surprising that no programme was made about the Brontë sisters. This may have resulted from the prevailing workplace culture – programme credits show that women had little involvement in the making of these programmes.

It has been noted earlier in this chapter that the LMCR unit was used for outside broadcasts that, in series such as *Hometown*,<sup>117</sup> made much of the history and heritage of the places visited. Every BBC region would at some time have done a series like *Hometown* and Robert Dillon has used a BBC West series, *Day Out*, to argue that the way landscape and locality are used in

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<sup>111</sup> Bill Greaves, interview; *Houses of the Sun*, 8 December 1978.

<sup>112</sup> *A Future For Yorkshire’s Past*, 2 June 1982

<sup>113</sup> *The Sheffield Gang Wars*, BBC North, November 1986 was based on J.P. Bean, *The Sheffield Gang Wars* (Sheffield: D & D Publications, 1981)

<sup>114</sup> *East to West*, Real Life Media Productions for BBC North, 22 March 2001.

<sup>115</sup> *The Jews of Leeds*, BBC North, 1981, produced by Allan Kassell.

<sup>116</sup> *Lady Be Good*, December 1988

<sup>117</sup> See above, 149.



regional television programmes appeals to a ‘core of paradigmatic nationality evolved from the Second World War when it was essential to reinforce and reiterate a sense of national identity’ and that ‘regional history inevitably feeds into the regeneration of national identity’.<sup>118</sup> Dillon is arguing that regional history programmes inevitably contribute to collective national identity, the paradigm for this being Humphrey Jennings’ film *Listen to Britain* with its wartime propaganda message of national unity. But even if Dillon is right about this, if no regional events or experiences can be found that do not fit easily into history presented as national collective memory,<sup>119</sup> then surely by becoming part of the nation’s history as represented on television - several of these programmes were shown on the network - they also endeavoured to create a sense of the region’s past. For producer Patrick Taggart the point was ‘to give them [the public] local history, how they were, where they’d come from’.<sup>120</sup> However, by too frequently returning to the same contributors and to formats and subject matter that appeared to have been successful, BBC North producers failed to fully reflect the diversity of the region’s history.

## **The changing region**

In 1981 the region made a short documentary series where the focus on change was made explicit in the way it was titled. *Sign of the Times* dealt with two themes that were to re-occur in programmes made during the decade – unemployment and people moving in search of a better life. Thus *Changing Over – Taking the Plunge* looked at how an engineering worker and a company director started their own businesses when they were made redundant,<sup>121</sup> in *Change of Scene – Bound for Australia* reporter Judith Stamper, with the help of an Australian reporter,

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<sup>118</sup> Robert Dillon, *History on British television: Constructing Nation, Nationality and Collective Memory*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010) 46

<sup>119</sup> The 1984-1985 Miners’ Strike may be one such event

<sup>120</sup> Taggart, email.

<sup>121</sup> BBC North, 18 December 1981.

followed a family who were moving from Scunthorpe to New South Wales<sup>122</sup> and *Fields of Change* reported on the human costs of modern farming in Lincolnshire.<sup>123</sup> The central place given to industry in reporting the region's news has been explored in the previous chapter but, except in terms of looking back,<sup>124</sup> there seems to have been little interest in making documentaries reflecting on the impact of industrial change until 1980 when Bill Greaves commissioned six programmes to reflect what was happening. Producer Doug Smith points out that coal mining did not feature in the series because at the time its future seemed to be secure.<sup>125</sup> While the series, *Our Northern Economy*, must have resulted from a belief that some regional issues required more time for reflection than was available in a news magazine item, the programmes were made close to the time when the BBC's charter was due to be renewed and the series might also have been considered to be one way to demonstrate the relevance of regional television to MPs.<sup>126</sup> Judith Stamper, who had worked on *The Money Programme* and *Newsnight*, was both researcher and presenter and remembers:

These were not Yorkshire stories, these were national stories – the decimation of Britain's industries in the 1980s, and that was coal, steel, engineering, all of them were reduced and the fall out was jobs, the fall out of communities, the fall out was the industrial heartland becoming the wasteland in each of those cases.<sup>127</sup>

Although *Miners on the Move* had suggested that, with the opening of the Selby coalfield, the region's mining industry was expanding, a 1983 documentary *Forgotten Valley* focused on unemployment in part of South Yorkshire following the closure of its pits, a theme previously taken up in 1977,<sup>128</sup> but, perhaps because of the extensive coverage both on *Look North* and nationally, no documentaries dealt directly with the year-long Miners' Strike. In the aftermath of the strike a film was made exploring the extent to which it had changed the lives of women in

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<sup>122</sup> BBC North, 4 December 1981.

<sup>123</sup> BBC North, 11 December 1981.

<sup>124</sup> Programmes featuring steelworker Ernest Pickering and colliery manager Jim Bullock were referred to earlier in this chapter.

<sup>125</sup> Smith, interview.

<sup>126</sup> The BBC's Charter was renewed in August 1981.

<sup>127</sup> Stamper, interview

<sup>128</sup> *No Job for a Spanner*, BBC North, 27 September 1977.

Yorkshire's pit villages and in 1990 (by which time all regional features had to be issue led) a programme in the *Close Up North* series was prompted by the NUM Special Delegate Conference to discuss the Lightman report on the union's finances.<sup>129</sup> Although the meeting took place in Sheffield and there were interviews with miners from Hatfield colliery in Derbyshire, the programme also included a report from Maerdy in South Wales, suggesting this was a national story. More usually, though, regional features did focus on the 'fall out for communities': the 1990 *Close Up North* series also visited Creswell in Derbyshire as it faced the closure of its pit while in 1981 *The Thirty-Five Million Pound Pay Off* focused on the effects of being made redundant on Scunthorpe steelworkers and also provided an opportunity to make a film in Lincolnshire.<sup>130</sup> And, with the highest post-war levels for youth unemployment recorded in the 1980s, it is not surprising that several programmes dealt with this subject. Typical of these was *Giro Generation*<sup>131</sup> where Mike Smartt reported on unemployment amongst school leavers and university graduates but also included were interviews with Norman Tebbit, then Secretary of State for Employment, and Len Murray, General Secretary of the TUC. These were indeed national stories, not consciously intended to project regional identity but to reflect the experiences of people who lived in the region.

By 1987 the economic situation in the region was often depicted in terms of the North-South divide. This is not surprising; Dave Russell has observed that the 'economic travails of the decade placed the North-South divide on the agenda more firmly than at any time since the 1930s'.<sup>132</sup> It was the anticipation that this would be a key issue in the 1987 General Election that prompted a two-part documentary<sup>133</sup> which focused on a couple's move from the 'poor North', depicted as being in industrial decline in contrast to the 'technological boom' being experienced

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<sup>129</sup> *Close Up North: Scargill – Still King Coal?* BBC North, 1990

<sup>130</sup> BBC North, 7 April 1981.

<sup>131</sup> BBC North, 19 November 1982.

<sup>132</sup> Dave Russell, *Looking North*, 5.

<sup>133</sup> *Beyond the Great Divide: When Opportunity Knocks*, BBC North, 30 January 1987; *Beyond the Great Divide: A Manifesto for the North*, 6 February 1987.

in the South.<sup>134</sup> While the first programme told the story of the move, the second provided a platform for discussion for politicians from the main political parties.

The region's programmes on education also dealt with national issues. David Seymour, who produced and presented *Your Child - School Report 72*,<sup>135</sup> believes this could be seen as a regional programme because Sir Alec Clegg, Chief Education Officer for the West Riding County Council, was then seen to be spearheading educational change.<sup>136</sup> The series was promoted by an article in the *Radio Times* that asked if it was now 'Goodbye to chalk and talk?'<sup>137</sup> and its starting point was parents' perceived concerns about 'progressive education'. Each programme in the series featured a twenty-minute film reporting on how changes like the introduction of comprehensive education were working out, followed by a studio discussion with 'experts'.<sup>138</sup> Asked by the *Radio Times* to choose her programmes of the week, Margaret Thatcher, Secretary of State for Education, included the final programme in the series, almost certainly because she was appearing as one of the experts.<sup>139</sup> In writing: 'Parents should be involved more in education, but may be fearful that some of the techniques are different from their own time. This programme is an opportunity for parents to understand what is going on and why,' David Seymour believes that Thatcher was highlighting regional television's role.<sup>140</sup>

The challenges facing local government were a recurrent theme, providing a platform for local and national politicians which might also help to secure support for regional television in future broadcasting debates. In 1971's *Tale of Four Cities*, billed as a 'regional enquiry series', Patrick Nuttgens visited Lincoln to discover how the competing claims between conservation and development were being resolved.<sup>141</sup> The same question formed the basis for a much more

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<sup>134</sup> BBC 2 listings, *Huddersfield Daily Examiner*, 30 January 1987.

<sup>135</sup> The series of four programmes was transmitted in January 1972.

<sup>136</sup> David Seymour, interview.

<sup>137</sup> Robin Thornber, 'Goodbye to "chalk and talk"?', *Radio Times*, 6 January 1972.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>139</sup> 'My choice', *Radio Times*, 27 January 1972.

<sup>140</sup> Seymour, interview.

<sup>141</sup> BBC North, 10 August 1971.

leisurely film on York, shown in two parts regionally and as one forty-six minute programme on the network. Here Nuttgens talked about the origins of the city as well as its ‘human reality’, showing how its citizens were now making use of their churches and pubs, declaring that the ‘greatest urban challenge of them all’ was to encourage people to return to live in the city centre.<sup>142</sup> But it was probably Nuttgens’ 1984 series, *The Flight From Utopia: Forty Years of Northern Townscape*,<sup>143</sup> which led in 1987 to BBC2 commissioning a series on the history of social housing for the network. Freed from any regional ‘peg’ and over an extended production period, Nuttgens and his BBC Leeds crew travelled around the country filming for *The Home Front*,<sup>144</sup> a series judged by cultural historian Fiona MacCarthy to be a ‘memorable television history of British housing’.<sup>145</sup> But BBC Leeds’ producers had also made programmes that, while being less momentous, dealt with more specific experiences related to housing. In *The Tale of Four Cities* series, Peter Harland, editor of Bradford’s *Telegraph and Argus*, presented a short film drawing attention to the many problems caused by the city’s inadequate housing<sup>146</sup> while *They’re Knocking Down Alcatraz* focused on residents celebrating the demolition of Leeds’ aptly-named Leek Street flats, just fifteen years after they were built.<sup>147</sup> Later programmes tended to focus on the social problems associated with such housing. When producer Allan Kassell visited the Bransholme estate in Hull which had an unemployment rate of 26.5%, he concluded: ‘That heart symbolizing Bransholme’s community spirit now has a more steely look. With so many people out of work and with all the related problems of poverty, crime and neglect, Bransholme sometimes looks like a place under siege. In a way it is. In a country divided by economic extremes Bransholme is stuck at the wrong end of the spectrum.’<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> *Network: York: A Personal Journey*, BBC2, 30 March 1976

<sup>143</sup> BBC North, September 1974.

<sup>144</sup> BBC 2, April-May 1989.

<sup>145</sup> Fiona MacCarthy, ‘Patrick Nuttgens’, *The Guardian*, 17 March 2004.

<sup>146</sup> BBC North, 31 August 1971

<sup>147</sup> BBC North, 10 December 1982.

<sup>148</sup> *Big-Hearted Bransholme*, BBC North, November 1985.

In the wake of *The Home Front*, another film made directly for the network set out to show the effects of unemployment and poverty in another council estate, this time in Huddersfield. However, the decision that in the BBC's English regions, network production should once again be largely confined to Manchester, Bristol and Birmingham meant that the responsibility, and credit, for the film passed to a Bristol producer.<sup>149</sup> It is impossible to say if the outcome would have been any different had it been completed in Leeds but according to regeneration expert Julian Dobson:

Local people still rankle at how they were portrayed, the producers playing to the stereotypes of dysfunctional families with uncontrollable children in squalid surroundings. Locals say most families were nothing like that, but the behaviour of a few became the yardstick by which all were judged. And they claim, with some justification, that the council used the area as a 'dumping ground' for people it considered too much trouble.<sup>150</sup>

At the very beginning of *The Estate*<sup>151</sup> the narrator points out this this could be anywhere in Britain, it just happens to be in Huddersfield. However, a spokeswoman from the tenants' association complained to the local newspaper that 'nowhere did it [the film] show the many hard working people working together to make the estate a good place to live', adding:

The only people who benefit from this programme are the researchers and producers who will all have bigger bank balances. Those of us who live here are left with an even worse name and will have to struggle to pick up the pieces. We don't all keep the dustbins in the kitchen.<sup>152</sup>

Her complaint was echoed by a representative from the council<sup>153</sup> and also by Huddersfield MP Barry Sheerman who wrote to the BBC to tell them he was 'very disturbed' about the programme because it did not show anything of the large number of people living normally on the estate, some of whom were active in the tenants' association.<sup>154</sup> In contrast, one of the final remarks in the BBC Leeds' film on the Bransholme estate came from a social worker who

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<sup>149</sup> See above, chapter one.

<sup>150</sup> Julian Dobson, 'Social housing needs to be a training ground, not a dumping ground', accessed 9 September 2013, <http://livingwithrats.blogspot.co.uk/2011/11/social-housing-needs-to-be-training.html>

<sup>151</sup> *The Estate*, BBC1, 30 October 1990. At the time of writing sections of the film were available on YouTube.

<sup>152</sup> 'Estate hits back at "bias" in TV coverage', *Huddersfield Daily Examiner*, 31 October 1990.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

<sup>154</sup> 'Riddings tenants still angry at the BBC', *Huddersfield Daily Examiner*, 2 November 1990.

claimed that there were things which could be done to improve the quality of life there, and in 1997 the station made a follow up programme showing the initiatives that been taken, providing a much more optimistic view of life on the estate.<sup>155</sup>

However, council house residents were not the only ones to object to the way they were portrayed by television producers and follow-up programmes were not always successful. Speaking to the *Huddersfield Daily Examiner* ahead of the transmission of *The Commune - One Year Later*,<sup>156</sup> producer Allan Kassell commented: ‘They have discovered there is no such thing as personal freedom. You have got to have a structure and some rules or there is no order – even with little things like using the kitchen to prepare food. There have to be set times or it is chaotic’.<sup>157</sup> The commune’s members accused the producer of deliberately making it ‘look as though the whole thing was breaking up’.<sup>158</sup> The *Sheffield Telegraph*’s reviewer accused Kassell of being ‘salacious’ in the way he questioned one commune member about a sexual relationship.<sup>159</sup>

But little attempt was made by the station’s feature producers to reflect real changes in the region’s composition and its growing minority communities. While developing stories were usually covered by *Look North*, a programme on racial segregation in schools, timed to coincide with the publication of a Harris poll on the issue, provided the basis for a news report in the *Guardian*.<sup>160</sup> This was a national story – the poll had been commissioned by London Weekend Television – but had its roots in a regional story; a small number of parents at a Dewsbury school had kept their children away from school because 85% of pupils came from an Asian

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<sup>155</sup> *Close Up North: The Estate We’re In*, BBC North, 4 December 1997.

<sup>156</sup> BBC North, 13 February 1976.

<sup>157</sup> Stephen Cliffe, ‘Hamlet commune discovers that everyone needs rules’, *Huddersfield Daily Examiner*, 10 February 1976.

<sup>158</sup> Stephen Cliffe, ‘Angry commune dismissed BBC TV documentary and allegations’, *Huddersfield Daily Examiner*, 20 February 1976.

<sup>159</sup> *Sheffield Telegraph*, 20 February 1976.

<sup>160</sup> ‘Parents “may choose segregated schools”’, *The Guardian*, 14 November 1987.

background.<sup>161</sup> It was a government minister's comment on the programme that racially-segregated schools would have to be accepted as a consequence of greater parental choice which brought it to the attention of the national media.<sup>162</sup> More usually the presence of people from multicultural backgrounds was reflected in individual stories. *Goodbye Chapeltown* focused on Abdul Ali, one of the founders of the Leeds Carnival, who was now returning to his native Jamaica after seventeen years in the UK<sup>163</sup> and *A Man of Substance* was a rags-to-riches story, as described in its listing in the *Guardian*:

Thirty-five years ago, when Kewal Singh Bhullar arrived as a penniless immigrant in Bradford, speaking no English, he got a job working seven nights a week in a woollen mill. Today that same millworker is part of his multi-million pound leisure wear empire. In this film from BBC Leeds Punjabi-born Mr Bhullar recalls the years of struggle to achieve rag-trade riches and tells of the racist attacks that cloud the success. 'All people see is the wealth. They don't see how hard I, and others like me, have worked. The Asians have made real contributions to this country's economy.'<sup>164</sup>

Kewal Singh Bhullar's story was later to be cited by sociologists questioning the extent to which such stories are supported by statistical evidence.<sup>165</sup> While the BBC Leeds producers may have largely ignored the way in which the composition of the region's population was changing, it has been shown that there was some attempt to reflect the impact of change on those communities whose livelihood had centred on the region's traditional industries. According to producer David Seymour:

A lot of life outside London was either ignored or patronized or became a kind of a caricature so it was a Yorkshire tyke or it was a scouser from Liverpool. The caricature of the Yorkshire tyke, which often featured on television until regional television made it much more real for people, because - at our best - we didn't patronize because we were part of the audience as well. We lived in the community and what affected the community affected us too and so there was that sort of empathy.<sup>166</sup>

But perhaps it was more difficult to show such empathy through programmes when the community in question was perceived to be different in some way.

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<sup>161</sup> *Huddersfield Daily Examiner*, 6 November 1987.

<sup>162</sup> *Guardian*, 14 November 1987. The minister was Baroness Hooper.

<sup>163</sup> BBC North, 24 September 1982.

<sup>164</sup> *Guardian*, 23 May 1987.

<sup>165</sup> Ellis Cashmore and Barry Troyna, *Introduction to Race Relations*, (London: Taylor and Francis, 1990) 87-88.

<sup>166</sup> Seymour, interview.



## Projecting the arts

In 1964, 'A visitor', reporting on the BBC's Regions for the *Listener* magazine, set out to answer the question, 'What is "the North"?' While regional broadcasting was necessary 'to ensure that it [the national network] is truly national', it should also aim to provide for 'special local tastes'. Although the article mentioned the 'Mersey sound' and referred to the success of the BBC's Leeds-based North Region drama department in fostering new writing, the only 'local tastes' cited were choral and brass band music which, according to the anonymous author, were 'less popular' in the rest of the country.<sup>167</sup> The list of television features produced by the BBC in Leeds from 1971 (Appendix Three) shows that, although little interest was shown in brass bands and none at all in choral music, music continued to provide ready material for programmes and, rather than just catering for 'local tastes', producers did attempt to reflect the diversity of cultural activity within the region.

Just as the first regional feature in 1971 had been founded on Jimmy Savile's version of Yorkshireness, so in the same year regional traditions provided the basis for *North Country Christmas* presented by fellow Yorkshireman Eddie Waring.<sup>168</sup> It was folk music, rather than brass bands, that featured in the TV station's earliest music programmes: *A Yorkshire Kind of Folk* was followed by two series of *North Country Folk*<sup>169</sup>. This may have been because, prior to the opening of the purpose-built TV studio in 1974, space was limited. However, the requirement in the same year that each BBC English region contribute a programme to a network series, *Folk of Today*, suggests the enthusiasm for folk music within the BBC was not confined to Leeds.<sup>170</sup> Presumably Leeds producers had a different audience in mind for *Swing in the Seventies* featuring the Syd Lawrence Orchestra but there does not seem to have been any

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<sup>167</sup> A Visitor, 'Round the BBC Regions-II: What is the "the North"?', *The Listener*, 9 April 1964, 558-559.

<sup>168</sup> BBC North, 12 December 1971.

<sup>169</sup> *A Yorkshire Kind of Folk*, BBC North, 4 January 1972; *North Country Folk*, BBC North, September 1972, November-December 1973.

<sup>170</sup> The programme from Leeds featuring progressive folk bands Magna Carta and Amazing Blondel had its regional transmission on 18 December 1973 and was networked on 29 September 1974, the *Radio Times* listing emphasizing that each programme had been made specifically for its regional audience.

obvious links between the band and the region. The series *We've Got the Music* attempted to combine both national and regional appeal by using Radio One presenters John Peel, 'Kid' Jensen and David Hamilton to each champion a band associated with the region alongside BBC North continuity announcer Brian Baines, well known to audiences because he read the close-down news headlines in vision, who introduced the Yorkshire Jazz Sextet.<sup>171</sup> Occasionally it could be shown that the world had come to Yorkshire, for example American Blues legend Champion Jack Dupree who was then living in Halifax.<sup>172</sup> And in a very different sense *Imago Mundi* set out to reflect the origins of communities who had settled in West Yorkshire through their 'exotic music and dance' – Punjabi and Latvian music; dance from the Ukraine, Africa and India; a West Indian steel band; 'Israeli' music and dance from two Leeds Jewish societies; the Los Caribos 'limbo dancers'.<sup>173</sup> There does seem to have been an attempt to reflect the wide range of music that could be found in the region: the idea for a film on pub bands, *Leeds on the 'B' Side*,<sup>174</sup> came from freelance assistant film editor and part-time musician Ernie Wood who also presented the programme, while the OB unit attempted to bring the region's university and college music scene to a wider audience.<sup>175</sup> There were also programmes that were clearly rooted in the region because they focused on specific venues - the Leadmill in Sheffield and the Astoria and Coconut Grove in Leeds - that were unlikely to appear on national television.<sup>176</sup> But there were more incidental ways of reflecting cultural activity within the region. *Steel City Blues* (1984) linked the city's changing industrial fortunes to the return of Sheffield Wednesday FC to the First Division, thus providing 'for the people of Sheffield at last a success to celebrate' but it also set out to show how the city's identity and that of its football fans and its industry were

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<sup>171</sup> BBC North, September-October 1976, repeated July 1977.

<sup>172</sup> *Champion Jack Dupree: A Barrelhouse of Blues*, BBC North, 11 December 1973.

<sup>173</sup> BBC North, 20 July 1979.

<sup>174</sup> BBC North, 9 July 1982.

<sup>175</sup> *Bubbling Under*, BBC North, March-April 1983 with a compilation *Best of Bubbling Under* transmitted on 21 May 1984.

<sup>176</sup> *Jazz at the Leadmill*, BBC North, March-April 1984; *Ronnie Scott at the Coconut Grove*, BBC North, April 1987; *Live at the Astoria*, BBC North, January 1989.

intertwined. That this is a film about the city's identity is also apparent from its soundtrack, a point which is emphasized in the programme's first credit: 'Music from Sheffield by ABC, Joe Cocker, Human League, Def Leppard'.<sup>177</sup>

While interview-based programmes focused on celebrities with regional connections, providing a platform for new and amateur artistic activity was seen as a way to engage viewers. As Regional Television Manager Bill Greaves told the *Yorkshire Ridings* magazine prior to the launch of a second weekly opt-out slot in 1976: 'We try to make programmes that affect and involve people from this region – non-professional people. We like to get out and about.'<sup>178</sup> *Here Comes Everybody*,<sup>179</sup> comprising studio performances by poets and writers may well have owed something to Alfred Bradley's *Northern Drift*<sup>180</sup> but more typical were programmes that reported on community arts projects. In 1974 an amateur drama group in Bingley was filmed putting together their next production,<sup>181</sup> and the OB cameras later went out on the road to schools and even to a Leeds social club with Opera North. Perhaps it was thought giving these programmes individual titles (*Performing Peace*<sup>182</sup>, *Pints and Puccini*<sup>183</sup>, *Jeans and Giovanni*<sup>184</sup>, *Cinderella Workshop*<sup>185</sup>) rather than a series title containing the word 'opera' would be less likely to deter viewers.

Producer Patrick Hargreaves believes regional manager Bill Greaves had a particular desire to reflect the arts of the region and was prepared to take risks, demonstrated by his commissioning several series on contemporary dance. He believes this was both practical and pioneering because there were no extra costs in using the Leeds studio and its staff camera crew – 'hours

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<sup>177</sup> BBC North, 30 April 1984. At the time of writing the programme could be viewed online, accessed 10 September 2013, <http://sheffieldblog.com/2009/03/24/steel-city-blues-bbc-documentary/>

<sup>178</sup> Joan K. Lapprell, 'The BBC Team Look (optimistically) North', *Yorkshire Ridings*, 12, Winter 1975-1976, 92.

<sup>179</sup> BBC North, March-April 1973, November 1974.

<sup>180</sup> See above, chapter two.

<sup>181</sup> *Coming Up Roses in Bingley*, BBC North, 10 May 1974.

<sup>182</sup> BBC North, 4 March 1983.

<sup>183</sup> BBC North, 11 March 1983.

<sup>184</sup> BBC North, 18 March 1983.

<sup>185</sup> BBC North, 25 March 1983.

and hours' of recording took place - and because of the presence of the Leeds School of Contemporary Dance - 'a very famous place where contemporary dance was developed'.<sup>186</sup> In fact, the School, created by Leeds City Council in 1985, came out of work that was being done in Leeds schools in the 1970s and early 1980s<sup>187</sup> and it was these pupils who featured in *Class* broadcast in 1981.<sup>188</sup> This was followed by another dance series *Making Moves*,<sup>189</sup> according to Patrick Hargreaves, the production was 'a bit fly-by-night, sometimes using PSC instead of the studio cameras, and some very bold lighting' but the programmes 'were successful in their own way'. Looking back, he says: 'It was great to be part of that process rather than the business of giving something the widest possible appeal which unfortunately I think has happened since'.<sup>190</sup>

Arts magazine programmes, which provided information about cultural activities and events happening across the region, were also seen as fulfilling the public service remit. *Coming on Strong*, featuring 'arts and pastimes', and presented by poet Pete Morgan in 1974,<sup>191</sup> was the precursor of *Northern Lights* broadcast between 1984 and 1987. Using the Sheffield-based writer and critic Paul Allen as presenter might have been seen as bringing a degree of national credibility to the series as Allen also presented the Radio 4 arts magazine *Kaleidoscope* but Peter Levy, who then hosted BBC Radio Leeds' lunch-time programme, took over in 1987. In addition to event listings the format provided production staff with both the opportunity to refer to places from around the region but also to be creative – for example, a typical programme from 1984 included a thirteen-minute item on the Hull Truck Theatre Company together with studio performances from the Phoenix Dance Company and the Northern Saxophone Quartet, both from Leeds. The last seven minutes of the programme was taken up in a studio interview with *Kes* author Barry Hines and Paul Allen, assuming that he had written the script, may have been

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<sup>186</sup> Hargreaves, interview.

<sup>187</sup> Northern School of Contemporary Dance, 'History', accessed 10 September 2013,

<http://www.nscd.ac.uk/view.aspx?id=20>

<sup>188</sup> BBC North, June-July 1981. The format was used again in *Class of '89*, September 1989.

<sup>189</sup> BBC North, February 1984.

<sup>190</sup> Hargreaves, interview.

<sup>191</sup> BBC North, June 1974

speaking from a metropolitan point of view when he introduced the item with the remark: ‘Full-time novelists are as rare in South Yorkshire as saxophones and symphony orchestras.’<sup>192</sup> In contrast, presenter Mike Smartt, shown looking behind the scenes in a programme on Scarborough’s Theatre in the Round, comments: ‘Scarborough’s very lucky indeed. The man who directs most of the productions is Alan Ayckborn, Britain’s most successful post-war playwright.’<sup>193</sup> The relationship between cultural activities in the English regions and its capital was continually being renegotiated and, while the BBC Leeds TV unit did not nurture talent in the way that regional radio had done, through both its weekly programmes and its nightly news magazine it could and did provide space to show some of the artistic activity that was happening across the region as well as a useful reminder that not every event worth reporting happened in London.

## Conclusion

This chapter has considered how the region was represented in the opt-out television feature programmes introduced in the wake of *Broadcasting in the Seventies*. Previously such programmes had been produced in Manchester. As has been shown, while regional managers were required ‘to meet the needs’ of the regional audience, they were given the editorial freedom to define those needs. While regional TV news magazines had to react to what was happening in the region, feature producers could decide to make programmes without first considering if there was any sort of news ‘peg’. But this new freedom was limited by time - one thirty-minute programme a week from 1971, and a second opt-out for part of the year from 1976 - and also resources. Film was the format of choice for prestige projects but it was expensive;

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<sup>192</sup> BBC North, January 1984.

<sup>193</sup> *Backstage at the Theatre in the Round*, BBC North, 19 February 1982.

consequently film programmes were frequently repeated and many programmes were studio-based.

And, while the region might have been clearly defined to BBC staff in terms of transmitter reach or editorial area, in reality it was more difficult to describe to viewers and, more often than not, this resulted in the region being referred to as Yorkshire. After all this was not only the county with the most ‘acres’ but it also had the largest number of potential viewers. The notion that Yorkshire could be defined not only by its very varied landscape, but also by the character of its inhabitants, provided the subject for the first TV feature programme made by the BBC in Leeds. While this could have been an opportunity to go out and look at the region as it was in 1971, instead it provided yet another showcase for its well-known presenter.

A different appeal to regional identity was employed by Brian Thompson and was more subtle and inclusive than that employed by Jimmy Savile; by using phrases such as ‘a little bit of you and me’ or ‘for your eyes only’ Thompson is including anyone who might be watching. And in their use of archive film producers were attempting, explicitly, to show there was an alternative to the national story. Whether or not regional television programmes *inevitably* reinforce national identity as Dillon suggests, these programmes set out to present the region’s past. And, in visiting towns, museums, stately homes and other places of interest, the region’s cameras were not simply bowing to a prevailing sense of nostalgia but were also showing viewers places of interest that they might want to visit in the future.

More often than not, people were thought worthy of being profiled because they had achieved some degree of national fame, but the relationship between national fame and regional origins is surely worth exploring. And while the subjects of such programmes may be part of the national narrative, then at the very least they show that not everything of note happens in London. And that perhaps is the point – unemployment, emigration, housing, education and deindustrialization were also part of an ongoing national story but that narrative developed in different ways across

the country and this was reflected in programmes made by the BBC in Leeds which focused on both individuals and communities.

Part of the role of the regional producer was also to discover people in the region who might not be well known but had interesting stories to tell and, once discovered, they often featured in more than one programme, as with colliery manager Jim Bullock or steel worker Ernest Pickering. This chapter has suggested that programmes were often made for pragmatic reasons: offsetting the cost of film productions with relatively cheap, studio programmes; the region's commitment to using the LMCR OB unit; the perceived wisdom of returning to formats and subject matter that seemed to work in the past. Nor is it surprising that so much use was made of presenters and writers like Patrick Nuttgens and Brian Thompson, former RAF bomber pilot Jack Currie and cameraman Sid Perou. Not only did they bring their ideas to the BBC in Leeds, but production staff wanted to work on these programmes, and there was always a good chance that they would be transmitted beyond the region through network repeats. And producing programmes for network transmission could be a way of making a national audience aware of what was happening in at least one part of the country, as programmes such as *Up North: Gangmasters* (1988) demonstrate.<sup>194</sup>

It has also been shown that programmes were being made that explored how the region was changing, particularly with regard to industry. While this chapter has, of necessity, had to identify and emphasize certain themes, Appendix Three reflects the range of subjects that were featured in these weekly regional programmes. Current affairs programmes sat alongside much more personal stories. If opportunities were missed, as has been suggested here, and particularly with regard to women and to the new ethnic communities that had settled in the region after 1945, then perhaps it is necessary to consider the culture of the workplace - who was making these programmes, and how they were made - a theme which will be explored in Chapter Six.

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<sup>194</sup> *Up North: Gangmasters*, BBC 2, 2 March 1988, followed migrant workers from Sheffield as they travelled to Lincolnshire to bring in the harvest..

Certainly little attention was given to the potential audience; according to producer Patrick Hargreaves, in making feature programmes, they were concerned with the specific nature of the subject, and believed there would be people who were just as fascinated by that subject, but always hoped to reach a broader audience.<sup>195</sup> Looking back, film editor Bob Geoghegan says:

I think we made the films for ourselves really. One knew there was an audience out there but on a daily basis one made an item for what we thought it was worth. For the best content and to the best of your ability...Obviously you wanted them to enjoy it.<sup>196</sup>

And, according to producer Patrick Taggart, 'We never met the public. We never asked what they wanted'.<sup>197</sup> The regional television staff's perception of the audience will be returned to in the final chapter of this study.

It has also been suggested that there was a particular desire to reflect the cultural life of the region and while, at the beginning, there was a tendency to view this in traditional terms, by the 1980s a much wider approach was being taken. To say that such programmes played a significant part in 'shaping' the region's culture would be misleading but they did provide a showcase for its artistic activity and, to some extent, did reflect its diversity. And, in the end, this was perhaps a more genuine representation than the stereotypical 'Yorkshireness' that had formed the starting-point for these regional programmes.

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<sup>195</sup> Hargreaves, interview.

<sup>196</sup> Geoghegan, interview.

<sup>197</sup> Taggart, email.



## Chapter Five: Broadcasting to one city – the BBC and Bradford

‘Pity poor Bradford’<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction

This chapter will use Bradford as a case study to consider how one Yorkshire city experienced the BBC through its national, regional and local broadcasting. In 2010 Radio Leeds, the BBC’s local radio station for Bradford asked listeners in a lunchtime phone-in programme: ‘Why is the city in such a state? The big question - are you ashamed of Bradford?’ following the announcement that a large city centre site previously marked for redevelopment was likely to remain unoccupied for some time<sup>2</sup> but fifty-two years earlier, writer and broadcaster J. B. Priestley, returning to his home town with a BBC film crew, had declared that Bradford was not good enough for Bradfordians. And while Bradford is by no means the only British town whose citizens believe it has been stigmatized by the media, from the very beginning of broadcasting through to the twenty-first century the way the city has been represented has frequently been a matter of contention.

Dave Russell in his 2003 article ‘Selling Bradford: Tourism and the Northern Image in the Late Twentieth Century’ argued that in the national imagination Bradford was ahead of its regional rivals in terms of its ‘stigmatization quotient’, the ‘most significant’ factor being the response within sections of the British media and the population at large to the emergence of the city’s south Asian community’.<sup>3</sup> Rather than focus on the city’s ethnic composition or on those news stories where the events being reported may have contributed to Bradford’s

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<sup>1</sup> ‘J.B.P.’s Sentimental Journey: Pity poor Bradford’, *Telegraph and Argus*, 27 October 1958. Although used here in connection with the programme *Lost City* transmitted on the previous evening, this phrase would have been recognized by many in Bradford as words supposedly uttered to the Earl of Newcastle during the siege of Bradford in 1642.

<sup>2</sup> *Liz Green Live*, BBC Radio Leeds, 11 February 2010.

<sup>3</sup> Dave Russell, ‘Selling Bradford: Tourism and Northern Image in the Late Twentieth Century’, *Contemporary British History*, 17:2(2003) 52.

negative image,<sup>4</sup> this chapter will look instead at a handful of programmes in which the BBC attempted to portray the city's urban landscape. Although in the 1950s and 1960s old neighbourhoods and city centres were being swept away across the country, it will be shown that to a certain extent Bradford came to represent the trope of a changing cityscape as far as broadcasters were concerned. It will consider the image of the city presented in these programmes and the extent to which they contain what Rob Shields has described as 'discrete meanings associated with real places or regions regardless of their character in reality'.<sup>5</sup> If programmes can be judged by their titles then *Lost City*, transmitted in 1958, and 1967's *The Glory That Was Bradford*<sup>6</sup> may be examples of how in Shields' words 'places became labelled, much like deviant individuals'<sup>7</sup> and they are discussed in the first part of this chapter.

That these were programmes made by outsiders to the city did not escape the notice of those Bradfordians who criticized them in the local press. Local broadcasting would seem to offer the opportunity to provide a wider, more balanced view of life within a community and avoid any risk of 'parachute journalism'.<sup>8</sup> This chapter will go on to discuss the problem Bradford posed for BBC local radio with the bringing together of Bradford and Leeds in one radio station, creating just as 'precarious a combination' as that identified by Asa Briggs in 1924.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 53. Russell identifies four major causes: Bradford's association with serial killers Donald Neilson and Peter Sutcliffe; the disappearance of jobs in textiles and engineering; the emergence of the city's South Asian community; the suggestion of political instability because of the strength of the Militant Tendency within sections of the city's Labour Party.

<sup>5</sup> Shields, *Places on the Margin*, 60

<sup>6</sup> *Lost City*, BBC TV, 24 October 1958; *Nairn's North: The Glory That Was Bradford*, BBC North Region, 24 October 1967.

<sup>7</sup> Shields, *Places on the Margins*, 11

<sup>8</sup> 'Parachute journalism' refers to reporters dropping into unfamiliar places, not properly aware of the story they are reporting on.

<sup>9</sup> Briggs, *The BBC: The First Fifty Years*, 79.

## The outsider's gaze: Portraying the city

Reporting on a visit to the Leeds/Bradford relay station in the year after it was opened, the BBC's Director of Education, J.C Stobart, reported: 'The station is somewhat hampered by serving two towns. There is distinct jealousy between Leeds and Bradford. The Station being placed in Leeds means a loss of interest in Bradford', adding

With regard to News, the Press is now quite friendly, but there is a complaint regarding local news from Bradford. Bradford is quite neglected. For example, on the night of November 2nd they were able to give the local Election Results for Leeds, but not for Bradford. It is desired that we should make representations to Reuters.<sup>10</sup>

A hand-written suggestion added to the report, but not by Stobart, states: 'This is being seen to with the feasibility, if not too expensive, of putting a special reporter into Bradford', but there is no evidence that this was followed up. In any case the Regional Scheme replaced 2LS - along with the BBC's other relay stations - in 1931 with both cities becoming part of the North Region.

Although the Region's attempts at localism did not please all its listeners, the representations of life in the region in the programmes of its Manchester-based feature producers was very different from the talks programmes produced in London.<sup>11</sup> *Wool: A Story of the West Riding* was one programme in a series of 'industrial features'<sup>12</sup> produced by D. G. Bridson who later commented: 'It is all I hoped to do on radio with ordinary people telling about their ordinary lives,'<sup>13</sup> but there was always the danger that such programmes would reflect the impressions of the BBC's producers rather than the experiences of programme

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<sup>10</sup> 'The Leeds station, a "stocktaking" report' by J.C. Stobart, 25 August 1928, Departmental - Regions - North - Hull, Leeds, Bradford, Liverpool 1925-1931', WAC R13/358

<sup>11</sup> See for example a comment made by a listener after a broadcast by a programme showcasing Bradford's musical talent: 'I say that although I am a Northerner I object to the self satisfied advertising atmosphere of some regional programmes, this in particular because of the bumptious manner in which it was announced'. *The City of Bradford*, Listener Research Department Report 31 January 1946, WAC R9/62/1

<sup>12</sup> *Wool: A Story of the West Riding*, BBC North Region, 27 June 1938. A copy of Bridson's script survives in the West Yorkshire Archives where it is catalogued as a play (WYAS Bradford, 9D94/20/7/5). The other industries covered by Bridson in the series were steel, cotton and coal.

<sup>13</sup> D.G. Bridson, *Prospero and Ariel - The Rise and Fall of Radio: A Personal Recollection* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1971), 69

participants. Salt's mill, featured in the programme, was situated outside Bradford's city boundaries, but it was only a couple of miles from its centre and very much seen as part of the Bradford district. Although *Wool* was made before the period covered by this study, it is included here because it left those whose lives were depicted in the programme asking questions about the extent to which broadcasters could be trusted. Geologist Arthur Raistrick, asked by Bridson to suggest a suitable location for his next industrial feature, *Coal*, expressed serious misgivings. Bridson had used his own scripted narrative together with workers' voices and a very deliberate use of music to create a sense of place but as Raistrick complained:

All my family, cousins, aunts work or have worked at the mill...Singing has never been allowed. Next day, when it was started they were told firmly to keep that for the BBC...Most people in the district regard that broadcast as "faked" and my own family tell me they have never listened since to any works broadcast because they will be faked like Salt's.<sup>14</sup>

However, despite the artifice employed and the mistake with the music – the programme was transmitted live from the BBC Leeds studio with the mill workers reading lines derived from earlier recorded interviews – these are still people reflecting on their own experiences. No such opportunities were provided in two post-war television programmes, *Lost City* and *The Glory That Was Bradford*, which were to be far more controversial.

*Lost City*, made for BBC Television in 1958, begins with J.B. Priestley arriving in his home town of Bradford and being greeted by local reporters supposedly eager to discover the reason for his return, but letters and records of payment in the programme file held at the BBC's Written Archives Centre reveal that the event was faked - the 'reporters' had been hired from a local news agency.<sup>15</sup> In the film Priestley is accompanied by Mavis Dean, a young 'reporter', on his 'sentimental journey' around the city but Mavis, in reality a Bradford music teacher, had auditioned for the role. A thinly disguised Bradford played a significant

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<sup>14</sup> Letter, Arthur Raistrick to Arthur Wilson, 14 October 1938, 'Coal' WAC N2/16

<sup>15</sup> Programme file – 'Lost City', WAC T32/889/1

role in several of Priestley's novels but as he stated in his *English Journey* of 1933: 'My Bradford ended in 1914'<sup>16</sup> and this idea certainly informed Priestley's approach to this programme. In a magazine article written two years before the programme was made, Priestley had written: 'I rarely visit and hardly know the Bradford of these "Fifties". It is now filled with people who care no more about me than I do about them'. In the event several Bradfordians cared enough to write to the local newspaper, the *Telegraph and Argus*, complaining about Priestley's remarks.<sup>17</sup> When, in 1957, he approached friends at the BBC with a proposal for a television film,<sup>18</sup> perhaps they should have known what to expect.

From the start the project ran into difficulties. The Head of North Region Programmes, B.W. Cave-Brown-Cave, had expressed his misgivings about the project, claiming that Priestley was not 'turning up any ideas' regarding the shape and content of the film and that Manchester-based Denis Mitchell, who was to have produced the film, was not 'en rapport with the idea'.<sup>19</sup> The programme's production had to be taken over by London producer Richard Cawston.<sup>20</sup> Cawston and Priestley seem to have had a much better relationship, and it was Cawston who was responsible for the format of the programme including its fictional opening sequences. Cawston had moved into production from film editing and it is likely that the mood of the programme was also largely his creation. It was Priestley, though, who came up with the programme's title, *Lost City*, and such was the controversy in Bradford, that writing in the *Radio Times* before the programme was even transmitted, Priestley said that of all his works until then: 'It is the only one to be the subject of a complaint before it existed.'<sup>21</sup> The *Telegraph and Argus* reported: 'Producer Richard Cawston emphasizes that this is not

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<sup>16</sup> J. B. Priestley, *English Journey* (London: Heinemann, 1934), Jubilee ed., 1984, 121.

<sup>17</sup> *Yorkshire Life Illustrated*, October 1956.

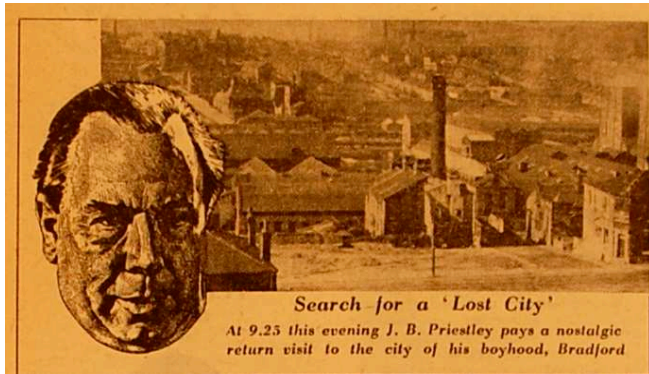
<sup>18</sup> A memo from Cecil McGivern, Deputy Director of Television Broadcasting to Head of Television, 21 October 1957, suggests that Priestley first approached him with the idea of doing a television programme, Programme file – 'Lost City', WAC T32/889/1

<sup>19</sup> Memo, HNRP to C.P.Tel, 'Priestley/Bradford Project, 3 February 1958.

<sup>20</sup> Memo, Richard Cawston to Norman Swallow, 31 March 1958, *ibid.* The film was shot by BBC North Region cameraman Gerry Pullen.

<sup>21</sup> J. B. Priestley, 'In Search of the Bradford I knew', *Radio Times*, w/b 24 October 1958.

supposed to be a documentary about Bradford. “Mr Priestley is seen wandering around Bradford”, he said, “but we have not attempted to show so much of Bradford as of him”.<sup>22</sup>



**Figure 19:** Priestley’s *Lost City* as it appeared in the *Radio Times*, w/b 24 October 1958.

In this Bradford of black terraces and smoking chimneys, of empty streets and disused theatres, images echoed by the music used in the soundtrack,<sup>23</sup> Priestley sets out to discover the city of his youth. He and Mavis walk through a deserted arcade seeking the office where he had worked as a wool clerk but things are now very different:

It’s changed completely. All these shops full of feminine frippery weren’t there forty years ago. Everything was sombre, dignified and masculine. There were tailors and wine and spirit merchants, not all this stuff. Now, of course, it’s all this feminine frippery because they make money out of that.

Priestley attends a play reading, visits the arts club and the amateur Civic Theatre where he is President, and St George’s Hall where good music can still be enjoyed. Counterpoised to this is his visit to the crowded Mecca Ballroom where, he observes, the dancing looks rather like ‘porridge cooking’. Back out in the deserted streets it is night-time and the camera peers through windows at people alone in their houses watching television, hinting at the emptiness of urban life. Only the market has not changed: ‘You get the real feeling of Yorkshire here – full of vitality’, says Priestley and certainly the film reflects this as it shows people going about their business. As Priestley and Mavis are shown enjoying the meat pies, he comments:

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<sup>22</sup> *Telegraph and Argus*, 23 October 1958

<sup>23</sup> The opening bars of Brahms’ Symphony No 3 in F Major, Third Movement.

‘Pies and peas, peas and pies. It’s an odd combination and as far as my experience goes peculiar to Bradford.’ But Priestley had used the image of a pie previously to symbolise not only what was good and solid about the city but about the nation – in a wartime *Postscript* broadcast he described visiting Bradford after an air-raid and discovering that a giant steaming pie had survived, defying ‘Hitler, Goering and the whole gang of them. It was glorious’.<sup>24</sup>



**Figure 20:** ‘You get the real feeling of Yorkshire here’ – Priestley and Mavis Dean in Bradford’s Kirkgate Market, *Lost City*, 26 October 1958.

In a memo written before the completion of the programme, Grace Wyndham Goldie, then Assistant Head of Television Talks, responded to the criticism the film was attracting in Bradford:

Since Priestley’s view of what makes a city interesting is the liveliness of its artistic life, and he goes to Bradford primarily to seek for what is left of its theatres, its painters and its writers, the programme is more likely to appeal more to those who hold these views than to a mass audience who may consider that sport or wealth is of greater importance than the arts.<sup>25</sup>

In his *Radio Times* article Priestley had expressed regret that so much had to be left out of the final cut: ‘In order to give this programme the shape, mood, tone, it was meant to have, all

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<sup>24</sup> *Postscript*, 29 September 1940. The script is included in Neil Hanson, *Priestley’s Wars* (Ilkley: Great Northern, 2008), 271.

<sup>25</sup> Memo – Grace Wyndham Goldie to C.P. Tel., 20 March 1958. Programme file – ‘Lost City’, WAC T32/889/1

this fine material had to go.’<sup>26</sup> But what was this ‘mood’ that was arrived at in the cutting room? Perhaps the clue is at the end of the film where he concludes:

The War came, which brought the brass but took a lot of the young men out of the city forever. Then Bradford became just another English industrial city, not good enough for the people in it. The people have kept their character, their warmth, their friendliness...It is not as good as it once promised to be. It’s not bad but it’s not good enough for the real Bradfordians.

Priestley’s suggestion that Bradford was a city that had lost its way was seized on by the *Telegraph and Argus* which responded on the day after transmission with an article sub-headlined ‘Pity poor Bradford’ that suggested only those people who lived in the city were entitled to call themselves ‘Bradfordians’.<sup>27</sup> Meanwhile, Cawston was still reassuring correspondents – many of whom had contributed to the programme and believed more positive images could have been shown – that the film really had been about Priestley.<sup>28</sup>

The BBC’s Audience Research department reported that the programme, broadcast at peak time on a Sunday on the BBC’s only television channel, attracted a relatively small audience which dropped off significantly before the end and that the audience reaction index (AI) was ‘a modest figure by any standards’.<sup>29</sup> Summing up the survey results, the report concluded: ‘Apart from such lively and interesting takes as the scene in the market (that apparently aroused many pleasant memories for old Bradfordians), there was said to have been little in the choice of pictures and places to counter the general impression that Bradford was a dull and depressing city.’ Included in the report were some of the comments expressed in the survey. A retired civil servant remarked: ‘As a Bradfordian for forty years I enjoyed it, but I feel that many of the real improvements in the city were overlooked. There is a spaciousness about Bradford which was not captured. It appeared to be just another manufacturing town; in

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<sup>26</sup> Priestley, *Radio Times*, 24 October 1958

<sup>27</sup> ‘J.B.P.’s Sentimental Journey: Pity poor Bradford’, *Telegraph and Argus*, 27 October 1958.

<sup>28</sup> Programme file -WAC T32/889/1

<sup>29</sup> ‘Audience Research Television Daily Summary, 26 October 1958’, WAC VR/58/584. The Audience Reaction Index aimed to measure audience satisfaction rather than the numbers of people watching or listening to a programme.



reality Bradford is much more.’ A housewife commended: ‘I enjoyed the film, but I thought it was Mr Priestley that was lost, and not the city.’<sup>30</sup> Cawston admitted it had been an ‘unpopular programme’ but still wrote several memos complaining about the audience research.<sup>31</sup>

A decade later another BBC television programme was to create just as much controversy in the city but this time it was produced in Manchester for transmission in the North Region and filmed by a regional crew. *The Glory That Was Bradford*<sup>32</sup> was the first in a series, *Nairn’s North*, transmitted in 1967 – each programme consisting of a film portrait of the city in question presented by Ian Nairn, the *Observer’s* architectural correspondent, whose views on the failure of urban planning were very well known,<sup>33</sup> followed by a studio discussion.<sup>34</sup> But why start with Bradford? According to the *Radio Times*, ‘Proud, Victorian Bradford has been rebuilt on a scale only matched by those English towns and cities unlucky enough to suffer a wartime blitz. Has this rebuilding been successful?’<sup>35</sup> The programme’s title prompted the *Telegraph and Argus* to preview the programme by talking to ‘men and women of the street whose daily life took them into the centre of Bradford’. The respondents, especially those described as being in favour of ‘change’, talked about their experiences of using the new developments in the city<sup>36</sup> while, in contrast, in the programme Nairn predominantly talks about appearances, guiding the viewer around a city centre almost empty of people. As with Priestley and his market, he does find one part of the city that is worthy of praise. Ivegate is ‘interesting because it hasn’t been swept away into a false idea of grandeur.

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Memo from Cawston, 15 November 1958. Programme file, WAC T32/889/1

<sup>32</sup> *Nairn’s North: The Glory That Was Bradford*, BBC TV North Region, 24 October 1967. YFA, 1696.

<sup>33</sup> Nairn’s polemic for the *Architectural Review*, ‘Outrage’, published in 1956, attacked the way urban planning was resulting in places losing their individuality.

<sup>34</sup> Only the film sequence has survived but see below for the report of the studio discussion in the *Telegraph and Argus*.

<sup>35</sup> *Radio Times*, 24 October 1967.

<sup>36</sup> ‘For Better, For Worse’, *Telegraph and Argus*, 24 October 1967. A majority of those interviewed were reported as being in favour of change.

It's still a jostling mix of streets'. The rest of the city centre is a 'long yawn where you used to have excitement'. Standing next to the ruins of a seventeenth century house, he comments: 'If it was in the Cotswolds it would be beautifully kept up and people would come fifty miles to see it, but it's in Bradford and look at it.'<sup>37</sup> This is reminiscent of Priestley's remark that 'Bradford is not good enough for Bradfordians', having shown its citizens crowding into dance halls and abandoning the theatres of his youth. But in his closing statement, made in the overgrown cathedral graveyard which, he says, 'epitomizes' the fate of Bradford, Nairn seems to question its very existence as a city: 'The city, in fact, is in a unique position because with Leeds only ten miles away it doesn't need to put on metropolitan airs. And so to work out its own true destiny as the friendliest and biggest village in England, and if the new Bradford manages to catch that and express it in buildings then it would be really worth coming to see'.<sup>38</sup>



**Figure 21:** The fate of Bradford as presented in *Nairn's North: The Glory That Was Bradford*, BBC North Region, 24 October 1967.

The studio panel was mixed in its reaction to Ian Nairn's film. Chairman Professor Patrick Nuttgens commented on the recent developments in Bradford: 'It's all been done to make the people fit the place,' while a city alderman complained that the programme had ignored

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<sup>37</sup> *The Glory That Was Bradford*.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

money spent on good useful buildings including the Technical College and new housing.<sup>39</sup> Bradford's response to the programme was reflected in the letters column of the *Telegraph and Argus* over several days and, while some correspondents agreed with Nairn that the 'character has been taken away from the town', others welcomed the 'light and air' provided by the new buildings, some of which, like the new library, were singled out for praise. The President of Bradford Grammar School's Old Boys wrote, 'I feel dismayed at the image of our city which seems to be projected by radio, television and literature. When any programme gives a documentary about Bradford the worst aspects are always exploited' and a Mr Robinson from the Holme Wood area of the city argued, 'If Bradford is to be put on the map, let us for heaven's sake do it in true perspective. No wonder we are called the back of beyond if this kind of portrait is allowed to be painted of us. We should knock the Nairns who knock Bradford'. He urged the paper's editor, who had also been part of the studio panel, to ensure that Bradford was projected in a more positive light.<sup>40</sup> While no reference to the programme has been traced within the BBC's Written Archives, there is an interesting reference to Nairn in a memo from the BBC Northern Editor to the Head of North Region discussing how the presenter might next be used: 'No one else is saying it so lucidly and so free of jargon. For those who are interested, a minority perhaps, it is full of meaning',<sup>41</sup> bringing to mind Grace Wyndham Goldie's comment on Priestley's film.

But if Bradford was not succeeding as a city, was it also up to broadcasters to ask why this was the case? In 1974 the BBC's London-based Further Education team produced a series of five programmes, *Planning for People*, using as its starting point the major local government reorganization taking place at a time when, in the words of the *Radio Times* billing, 'the face

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<sup>39</sup> 'Clash over City', *Telegraph and Argus*, 25 October 1967.

<sup>40</sup> 'Letters column' *Telegraph and Argus*, 30 October 1967, 'Time Bradfordians rebelled against fictional image', *Telegraph and Argus*, 31 October 1967. Some correspondents did agree with Nairn.

<sup>41</sup> Northern Editor to Head of Programmes North, 14 November 1967, WAC N25/333/1.

of the city and the district is changing daily as the planners carry out their programme'.<sup>42</sup>

While acknowledging that this was happening across the country, the series focused entirely on Bradford, delighting the *Telegraph and Argus*, which, in a preview article entitled

'Bradford is Star of New Series', informed its readers:

This is a splendid advertisement for a city which is trying to attract new industry for it shows some of the beautiful corners of the district and the new industrial sites which are bringing firms from far afield. But while this gives the series a special attraction for local audiences, the travelogue aspect is only incidental. The series is a Further Education project which examines one of the fundamental problems of modern planning: how to develop and improve an old area without at the same time trampling over individuals who happen to be in the way. To do this the producer – Gordon Crofton – has taken some typical local issues – the demolition of the old Kirkgate market and the Bradford Mechanics Institute and the proposals for the new Airedale trunk road. Protagonists from both sides argue their cases in an honest, almost fair and well-informed piece of reportage.<sup>43</sup>

The newspaper did not specify what it meant by 'almost fair' but sequences from Priestley's

*Lost City* are used in the series to advance the argument – his visit to the site of the wool

office where he had worked are here followed by shots of Arndale House because 'where

Swan Arcade used to be there are now the offices responsible for its development'.<sup>44</sup>

Although no documentation has survived to indicate why the Further Education team selected

Bradford, the existence of the Priestley film certainly made it easier to make visual

comparisons between past and present. The city's recently demolished Kirkgate Market,

home to Priestley's pie stall, is used to represent what is happening across the country:

Bradford's skyline has changed a lot in the last few years. The clean air act has ended the city's traditional murkiness and now tower blocks stand out against the stonework of the old facades. As new buildings have gone up many of the old ones have come down. The programme reaches far beyond Bradford. Have we the right to destroy our towns, our architectural heritage, when the planners' vision of the new conflicts with people's acceptance of the old?<sup>45</sup>

Yet, while the series title might have proclaimed that planning was for people, councillors,

former councillors, town planners and a spokesman from the Victorian Society present the

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<sup>42</sup> *Radio Times*, 9 October 1974.

<sup>43</sup> *Telegraph and Argus*, 9 October 1974.

<sup>44</sup> *Planning for People: 3: New Plans, Old Loves*, 23 October 1974, YFA 1714

<sup>45</sup> *Planning for People: 1: They are Changing Bruddersford*, 9 October 1974, YFA1712.

argument. The ‘people’ of Bradford are represented by only two voices: an elderly lady in a headscarf who talks about the loss of community spirit and a ‘small businessman’. Once again there is a suggestion that Bradfordians are getting the city they deserve when, at the end of the first programme, the businessman, having remarked that the City Hall is the building that most people identify with when they return home, adds: ‘If City Hall had to come down it would be a pity to miss the old clock and the chimes and so forth. I wouldn’t join the protest, mind.’<sup>46</sup>

The series observed that increasingly planning decisions were being taken by small groups of people within local authorities but it ignored a story that directly related to what had happened in Bradford. Six months before the series was transmitted, Pontefract-based John Poulson had been jailed for five years for corruption<sup>47</sup> but it was not the BBC that had asked the questions which led to the eventual exposure of a ‘web of corruption’ extending to all levels of government. In 1970, *Telegraph and Argus* journalist Ray Fitzwalter, following his investigation into the conviction for bribery of four officials from the Bradford City Architect’s department, had published an article profiling Poulson, entitled ‘The Master Builder’, which pointed to some of the architect’s extensive connections.<sup>48</sup> Fitzwalter had concluded: ‘The story of his rise has a particular significance for Bradford and for Yorkshire and gives a glimpse of the power and people who helped shape our modern cities.’

At the time, with the exception of *Private Eye*, Ray Fitzwalter’s article was largely ignored by the rest of the media until bankruptcy hearings in 1972 which led to Poulson’s eventual trial and conviction in 1974.<sup>49</sup> However, in his account of the early days of Radio Leeds, station editor Phil Sidey claimed that the station had intended to do a programme on Poulson’s firm but ‘our lawyers would not give us the go-ahead (the Bradford *Telegraph*

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> The court case followed an investigation instigated by Poulson’s bankruptcy in 1972.

<sup>48</sup> Ray Fitzwalter, ‘The Master Builder’, *Telegraph and Argus*, April 1970.

<sup>49</sup> John Poulson was jailed for conspiring to make or receive corrupt gifts in 1974.

thereupon beat us to do it)<sup>50</sup> Looking back, David Seymour, then a reporter for *Look North* - and, he believes, the only journalist to secure an interview with Poulson at the time of the bankruptcy hearings<sup>51</sup> - comments:

Regional journalism often reflects issues when they come to light and is an excellent sounding board for debate but has never been very effective in investigating these issues so I wouldn't like to claim that regional television in Yorkshire exposed John Poulson. He was exposed by the ITV programme *World in Action* and by *Private Eye*.

But David Seymour believes that *Look North* was more effective when reporting the bankruptcy hearings 'because then it wasn't just a question of what journalists had uncovered. It was then on the public record and our job then was to report it as accurately as we could and to get it to a very large audience which a paper like *Private Eye* couldn't do'.<sup>52</sup> Ray Fitzwalter's *World in Action* programme, *The Rise and Fall of John Poulson*, was transmitted in 1973<sup>53</sup> and in 1976 *Look North* identified some of the buildings in Bradford city centre as being where the Poulson affair had started.<sup>54</sup> When Patrick Nuttgens, who had chaired the studio discussion on Ian Nairn's profile of Bradford, presented his own view of the region's architecture in 1984, he chose the same place where Nairn had stood in 1967 to observe:

The whole knock-it-down, sweep-it-aside mood of the era really came to an end in the summer of '72 when a quiet Methodist architect from Pontefract filed for bankruptcy in Wakefield. The hearing and subsequent trials revealed a network of corruption spreading from Whitehall, through the nationalised industries and down to local planning committees.<sup>55</sup>

Both the Priestley and Nairn films became useful archival sources for later programme makers looking at Bradford, but images contained in past programmes are often presented as documentary evidence without any consideration of the context in which those programmes were made. Both *Lost City* and *The Glory That Was Bradford* were, as the BBC had

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<sup>50</sup> Sidey, *Hello, Mrs Butterfield*, 122.

<sup>51</sup> 'Poulson', *Look North*, 25 September 1972, BBC Leeds catalogue, YFA.

<sup>52</sup> Seymour, interview.

<sup>53</sup> See also Raymond Fitzwalter and David Taylor, *Web of Corruption: The Story of J.G.L. Poulson and T. Dan Smith* (St Albans: Granada, 1981).

<sup>54</sup> *Look North*, 15 November 1976, BBC Leeds catalogue, YFA.

<sup>55</sup> *The Flight from Utopia: 2: Years of Euphoria*, BBC TV North Region, 1984.

emphasized, personal viewpoints. For Ian Nairn Bradford was just another example of the failure of post-war architects and planners.<sup>56</sup> And if places can be regarded as constructs, imagined rather than imaginary, then Priestley, in contrasting the Bradford of his youth to those 1950s, may have been using both the programme and the city to implicitly advance his views on consumerism and mass communication, which he termed Admass.<sup>57</sup> And while it is impossible to know what impact these programmes had on the city's self-image, years later there was still an awareness that Priestley's programme had angered many in the city.<sup>58</sup>

### **Being there? Connecting with communities**

These programmes had presented Bradford from the vantage point of people who had come there only to make a programme; even Priestley, who had not lived there for forty years, declared he felt himself to be a stranger. Such programmes were not peculiar to the BBC and the correspondents to the local newspaper in the aftermath of Ian Nairn's programme were referring to an image of the city that they believed to exist across the media. The coming of local radio might have given the BBC more opportunity to project the concerns of those who lived in Bradford. Production Assistant Nigel Fell, who was with Radio Leeds almost from the start, remembers that some of the staff thought the new station would have more chance of success if it had been based in Bradford: 'They felt at the time – we are talking now about the situation forty years ago – that there was generally a better community spirit in Bradford than there was in Leeds'.<sup>59</sup> However, it was Leeds and not Bradford that was selected as one of the eight 'experimental' stations, the expectation being that more stations would be added in due

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<sup>56</sup> Gavin Stamp, 'Ian Nairn', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, accessed 10 June 2013, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/73627>

<sup>57</sup> See John Baxendale, *Priestley's England: J.B. Priestley and English Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007).

<sup>58</sup> Letter from John Gasgoigne, Bradford College of Art, wanting to purchase a copy of the programme to show at a 'special event' Programme file - 'Lost City' WAC T32/889/1

<sup>59</sup> Nigel Fell, interview.

course.<sup>60</sup> Not only had Leeds City Council offered some financial support but a radio station that identified with Leeds was also likely to reach a larger audience than its neighbour - the 1961 Census showed that Leeds was by far the largest city with a population of 510,676 compared to 295,922 in Bradford.<sup>61</sup> The two cities were nine miles apart but production assistant Nigel Fell remembers that, although the station's editorial coverage did not necessarily stop at the city's boundary, reporting on what was happening in Leeds was very much the priority. Within months of Radio Leeds' launch, Edward Lyons, the MP for Bradford East, was arguing in favour of what he termed 'district radio':

If local authorities are to meet the bill, as at present, of local radio, it would spread the load widely and more lightly if we acknowledged the reality that a local station penetrates beyond the locality into the region.

For example, Radio Leeds receives 40 per cent. of its mail from Bradford and is widely heard there. If there can be a Leeds/Bradford airport, why cannot there be a Bradford/Leeds radio station, or even a West Riding radio station? It is, of course, true that Bradford ratepayers have the benefit of listening without contributing. On the other hand, Radio Leeds does not feel obliged to cater especially for Bradford or other West Riding towns which receive its programmes. Nor does it have any studio in those other towns. Perhaps, therefore, the Government will consider district rather than local radio.<sup>62</sup>

Lyons argued that district 'stations' would supplement but not compete with local newspapers while urging the government to create a national network of local radio stations. He also suggested that increasing the number of radio stations would also increase the number of local broadcasting advisory councils and consequently the number of people responsible for broadcasting.<sup>63</sup> When in January 1969 the Leeds Chamber of Commerce asked why regional radio was not being expanded, Radio Leeds replied: 'Once the area served becomes larger

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<sup>60</sup> See Linfoot, *A History of BBC local radio in England*, for a detailed account of the selection process of the eight stations.

<sup>61</sup> '1961 Census of England and Wales, County Report', *A Vision of Britain Through Time*, accessed 2 May 2013, [http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/census/table\\_page.jsp?tab\\_id=EW1961COU\\_M3&u\\_id=10200120&show=&min\\_c=1&max\\_c=5](http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/census/table_page.jsp?tab_id=EW1961COU_M3&u_id=10200120&show=&min_c=1&max_c=5) These figures are for the County Boroughs rather than the new districts created by the 1974 local government reorganization.

<sup>62</sup> 'Broadcasting – Local Stations' *Hansard*, 11 November 1968, accessed 2 May 2013, <http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1968/nov/11/broadcasting-local-stations>

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*



than a single community, time on the air to each local population group has to be rationed with the result that listeners would lose all sense of local appeal.<sup>64</sup> But in the following year Lyons again asked the Postmaster General why no decision had yet been taken to extend Radio Leeds' coverage to Bradford and the rest of the West Riding, or of setting up a radio station in Bradford.<sup>65</sup>

Although by 1970 it was increasingly likely that Radio Leeds would be 'going West Riding',<sup>66</sup> Bradford's situation would be a recurring problem for the station's Advisory Council. When, in February 1970, Alderman Jessie Smith representing the West Riding County Council, declared that 'Bradford wouldn't come under a Leeds title', station manager Phil Sidey reported to the meeting that the city's newspaper was more 'flattering' of the radio station than the Leeds-based *Yorkshire Post* and *Yorkshire Evening Post* which, he claimed, printed only those letters that were 'hostile' to the station.<sup>67</sup> And at the June meeting, when the Advisory Council's chairman, Professor Tunbridge,<sup>68</sup> expressed the belief that in future there would also be BBC local radio stations in Bradford as well as York and Hull, Sidey suggested that the best solution would be small satellite stations which could opt in and out of the Leeds output.<sup>69</sup> As it happened, Tunbridge and Sidey had first met with both the Leader and Town Clerk of Bradford's council to discuss the possibility of setting up a satellite station in the city in the spring of 1969.<sup>70</sup> And by September 1970 discussions between the Council and the BBC had become more detailed - Bradford Council would provide central accommodation in the city at a peppercorn rent while the BBC would defray the cost of

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<sup>64</sup> Quoted in Briggs, 'Local and Regional in Northern Sound Broadcasting', 166. Briggs also cites a 1970 report by the Bow Group, *Home Town Radio* which used Radio Leeds as an example to explain the difference between local and regional radio, arguing that a radio station for the West Riding could not be described as local.

<sup>65</sup> 'Local Radio Stations', *Hansard*, 25 November 1969, accessed 2 May 2013, <http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1969/nov/25/local-radio-stations>

<sup>66</sup> See above, chapter one.

<sup>67</sup> Radio Leeds: Local Radio Advisory Council, Meetings, Minutes 3 February 1970, WAC R81/10/1

<sup>68</sup> Professor Sir Ronald Tunbridge was Professor of Medicine at the University of Leeds from 1946 to 1971.

<sup>69</sup> Radio Leeds: Local Radio Advisory Council, Meetings, Minutes 22 June 1970, WAC R81/10/1

<sup>70</sup> Reported in the Local Radio Advisory Council Meeting Minutes, 14 September 1970.

equipment and the installation of relay lines. A meeting had also been held with Harold Williams, the Assistant Head of BBC Local Radio, where it was agreed that additional staff would be required; the Council had asked for an extra £25,000 per annum and the BBC had promised £15,000.<sup>71</sup> In November 1971 the ‘Bradford Project’ was once again on the Advisory Council’s agenda when it was felt that the BBC was sincere in its intention to provide Bradford with its own station,<sup>72</sup> a belief it still seems to have held in the following year when the subject of ‘Bradford and the Future’ was debated and it was agreed that Radio Leeds would go into Bradford, providing a studio and extra production staff.<sup>73</sup> The BBC also informed the press that it had plans to build radio studios in each of the local authority districts in the new West Yorkshire Metropolitan County area.<sup>74</sup> At the next meeting of the Advisory Council Radio Leeds editor Ray Beaty reported on possible premises offered by Bradford Council but that at least four new producers would be needed.<sup>75</sup> However, throughout these protracted discussions there appears to have been very little discussion of programme content although, when the topic was raised in 1970, it was suggested that Bradford and Leeds were distinct enough to justify the ‘editionizing’ of specific programmes.<sup>76</sup>

By 1973 it was also clear that the BBC would need to increase its presence within Bradford if it wanted to compete effectively with local commercial stations<sup>77</sup> but as the negotiations with Bradford Council and representations by the Advisory Council to ‘the BBC in London’ continued, it also became apparent that while the BBC was prepared to pay the capital costs

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Radio Leeds: Local Radio Advisory Council, Meetings, Minutes 8 November 1971.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 11 September 1972

<sup>74</sup> *Telegraph and Argus* 4 September 1972, *Huddersfield Daily Examiner* 5 September 1972, *The Guardian* 12 September 1972. Established by the Local Government Act of 1972, the area covered by the new West Yorkshire County Council in the 1974 reorganization of local government included the metropolitan districts of Leeds, Bradford, Kirklees (administered from Huddersfield), Calderdale (administered from Halifax) and Wakefield.

<sup>75</sup> Radio Leeds: Local Radio Advisory Council, Meetings, Minutes 6 November 1972.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 14 September 1970.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 20 January 1973.

needed to provide a satellite studio in Bradford, no funding would be available for any extra staff.<sup>78</sup> As in 1968 when the BBC launched its regional TV news programme in Leeds just three months before YTV began broadcasting, BBC Radio Leeds opened a studio in Bradford City Hall in June 1975, in advance of its commercial rival, Pennine Radio.<sup>79</sup>

Based in the city centre and broadcasting to Bradford, as well as parts of west Leeds, Pennine Radio's managing-director Steve Whitehead declared that he would be filling 'an enormous gap in the market – a local radio station that has popular appeal' while also emphasizing its role as a community radio station.<sup>80</sup> *The Times* reported that the station's 'largest backer' when it launched was the National Union of Dyers, Bleachers and Textile Workers who held 14% of the company's shares at a time when the union's head office was also situated in the city.<sup>81</sup> One offshoot of the radio station was the Bradford Community Radio Charitable Trust, with the stated purpose of enabling the public to participate in the station's output while also contributing to helping Bradford charities.<sup>82</sup> In its publicity Pennine Radio also referred to its public service role, citing information it had broadcast during heavy snowfalls.<sup>83</sup> In its early years the station's aims were not that dissimilar to Radio Leeds, but it could also claim to offer Bradford people a voice in a studio that could be clearly identified in the city centre and to be a radio station which focused on Bradford's news and events.<sup>84</sup>

Although both the BBC and the Radio Leeds Advisory Council had always seen Bradford as the second priority in terms of editorial coverage, coming after Leeds but before the rest of

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 17 March 1973.

<sup>79</sup> Pennine Radio (Pennine 235) began broadcasting on 16 September 1975. Both YTV's regional news magazine, *Calendar* and the BBC's *Look North* covered the station's opening.

<sup>80</sup> 'Pennine Radio Launch 1975', clip from *Calendar*, YTV, 16 September 1975, accessed 1 July 2013, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZYX3BUBkzAU>

<sup>81</sup> *The Times*, 17 September 1975.

<sup>82</sup> Ivor Smith, 'Christmas calling...', *Yorkshire Life*, December 1978, 34.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Like Radio Leeds, Pennine Radio broadcast programmes to Asian listeners in their own languages (*Observer*, 22 May 1977). Sports reporter Tony Delahunty witnessed the Bradford City FC fire in May 1985 (*The Guardian* 13 May 1985, *The Times* 13 May 1985)

West Yorkshire,<sup>85</sup> the radio station did manage to establish a base in each of the town halls of the county's remaining local authority districts, staffed at times by 'district reporters' to widen the station's newsgathering. Given local radio's limited financial resources, the staffing of these district offices tended to be inconsistent. A former Radio Leeds journalist who joined the station in 1994 recalls:

It did seem that district reporters had been there as an idea for some time - but not necessarily as a reality by the time I arrived. Yes, there were proper, physical offices for them to be in and, having been nosy on visiting each of them and going through cupboards and suchlike, they had obviously been staffed until relatively recently (barring Huddersfield which was just an awful little room which never seemed to have been occupied much) - sufficiently for whoever used them to have built up contacts, diary and filing systems. However, only Bradford was permanently staffed<sup>86</sup>... It took until the mid-late 90s for them all to be properly staffed up to a point after a push to get people out to the districts again. And that was always at the risk of being 'called back' due to staffing crises at the Leeds end. So, when I arrived, I suppose you could say that the majority of the district officers/reporters were in abeyance but that situation did sort of change later.<sup>87</sup>

And there was also the possibility that those who worked in the district offices would feel isolated from their colleagues. As Colin Philpott who, as Head of BBC Yorkshire between 1997 and 2004, once again pursued the idea that Bradford should have its own BBC local radio station, observes:

If you create something called BBC Radio Leeds which is absolutely trying to cover the whole of West Yorkshire, I accept that, but if you park most of the people working on it in a room in Leeds, human nature is that they are going to notice, and be more in tune with what is happening in Leeds.<sup>88</sup>

He emphasizes that the failure to give Bradford its own BBC radio station was not to do with any lack of will on the BBC's part but with 'practicalities', not only of financial resources but in the siting and building of a transmitter.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Radio Leeds: Local Radio Advisory Council, Meetings, Minutes 5 September 1973.

<sup>86</sup> Here the contributor is referring to the staff of Radio Leeds' Asian language programmes based in Bradford.

<sup>87</sup> Email interview here used anonymously, 30 June 2012.

<sup>88</sup> Philpott, interview.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid. The BBC announced it would not continue with its plans for a new local radio station in Bradford in 2007 ('BBC drops ultra-local TV plans', *The Guardian*, 18 October 2007) and, having moved from Bradford City Hall to a new studio at the National Media Museum in 2003, finally closed its Bradford studio in 2012.

Furthering the cause of local democracy has always been seen as an argument for the increased localization of broadcasting. In 1925 J.C. Stobart had complained that no attempt had been made by the Leeds/Bradford station to report on Bradford's election results and when Frank Gillard provided an evaluation of the 'Local Radio Experiment' to the BBC Board of Management in 1969, the coverage of local democracy was one of the measures he used to gauge its success.<sup>90</sup> The *Radio Times* listings show that on Wednesday afternoons in the autumn of 1971 Radio Leeds was providing regular reports from the radio car on Leeds City Council meetings with round-ups in the station's main news but there does not appear to have been any attempt to rotate the radio car coverage of council proceedings across the districts. When the members of Bradford Council voted 47 to 21 against allowing the broadcasting of committee meetings on local radio, they may have had commercial radio in mind. But even if the vote had been reversed and Pennine Radio had decided to transmit council committee meetings, it is doubtful this could have been maintained when the station reduced its speech-based programming. The adding of an additional transmitter in 1984 meant that Pennine was no longer just the station for Bradford but was also transmitting to the Kirklees and Calderdale districts.

But some Bradfordians believed that local broadcasting needed to be more specific in targeting audiences. In 1988 the Labour Party in the city's Toller ward declared its support for pirate station Music City Radio [Paradise City Radio], asking that MP Max Madden help the station to achieve legal status. Councillor Rangzeb argued: 'A city with such a huge ethnic minority population really needs a radio station which reflect their views. A half hour programme on Pennine Radio is just not enough to satisfy their demand'.<sup>91</sup> The radio station had been set up by twenty 'young disc jockeys' to play reggae, funk, jazz, calypso and soul

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<sup>90</sup> Linfoot, *A History of BBC local radio in England*, 173

<sup>91</sup> *Telegraph and Argus*, 19 October 1988.

music on 104.9FM,<sup>92</sup> and it later began to transmit a two hour long Asian programme on a nightly basis which led to the establishment of Asian Paradise Radio (105.5FM) in 1989.<sup>93</sup>

When Clinton Blackwood was convicted of using apparatus for wireless telegraphy without a licence, he is quoted as telling the Department of Trade and Industry Inspector: ‘We’ve got no black music on Pennine’.<sup>94</sup> Despite its long-standing programming for West Yorkshire’s Asian and Caribbean communities, Radio Leeds was not mentioned.

## Conclusion

In this chapter the city of Bradford has been used as a case study to explore aspects of the BBC in terms of its impact on one location. It has shown that there was a concern by at least some residents about the extent to which the city was being accurately represented in the national media. Although focusing on programmes about the character of the city presented from personal viewpoints, the importance of locally-based journalism has been shown in explaining some of the changes the city was experiencing at the time. In the late 1960s, led by Frank Gillard, the BBC was attempting to connect more closely with local communities but, as Radio Leeds’ Advisory Council asked in 1972, ‘How local is local?’. This question was never fully resolved by the BBC. At the beginning Leeds had been very much the station’s priority and this would have been emphasized in the first two years by the policy of involving community groups where possible in programme production. Financial constraints meant that the BBC could not establish a local radio station in every large city but there does seem to have been an awareness on the part of BBC local radio managers that Bradford could have been better served. And although local radio reporters and BBC regional television

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> ‘Paradise City Radio – Bradford’, accessed 6 July 2013 <http://www.thepiratearchive.net/pcr-bradford/#prettyPhoto>

<sup>94</sup> *Telegraph and Argus*, 26 April 1989.

crews may not have been permanently based in Bradford as they were in Hull and Sheffield, they were no further away from Bradford than they were from places in the Leeds district.

Claiming that it was ‘too early for the historian to evaluate the cultural significance of the great change’,<sup>95</sup> in the conclusion to his 1975 paper on the BBC’s move from regional to local radio, Asa Briggs quoted the purposes of BBC local radio expressed in the Corporation’s promotional pamphlet, *This is Local Radio*:

The listener wants more news about local sport, weather, police information, traffic, lost children and pets, escaped prisoners, what happened at the Council meeting, what’s on next week at the Townswomen’s Guild, and how to join an amateur dramatic society. What did the local MP say in the Commons.<sup>96</sup>

With the exception of lost dogs and possibly the Townswomen’s Guild, BBC Radio Leeds would have reported on these things as they related to Bradford and would also have provided a platform for its people to have their say about local news and events and even to comment on how the city was being depicted by the media. Local identities are not fixed and both the commercial and pirate stations programmed their stations to appeal to listeners who wanted to hear more music. In addition, the pirate stations argued that they better represented the city’s ethnic communities but the continuation of both pirate and commercial radio stations was always precarious.<sup>97</sup> Although launched in 1994, shortly after the period described in this study, Bradford’s community radio station, BCB (Bradford Community Broadcasting) gives some indication of what a local station can achieve and has been described as a ‘model of good practice for community radio stations across the UK’,<sup>98</sup> but in empowering community groups to make their own programmes, stations like BCB should be seen as complementing

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<sup>95</sup> Briggs, ‘Local and Regional in Northern Sound Broadcasting’, 187

<sup>96</sup> BBC, *This is Local Radio: The BBC Experiment at Work* (London: BBC Publications, nd.), 4

<sup>97</sup> Pennine Radio experienced takeovers and frequency changes and in 1991 was relaunched as The Pulse.

<sup>98</sup> Joseph Rowntree Foundation, *The Bradford Community Guide: A guide to community and development projects* (York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2009), 13 <http://www.jrf.org.uk/system/files/bradford-community-guide-jan2010.pdf> [Accessed 9 September 2012]

rather than in competition with the BBC. How the BBC in Yorkshire has engaged with its audiences both regionally and locally will be explored in the final section of this study.





**Figure 22:** The BBC Leeds ‘girls’, late 1940s (courtesy, Brenda Wilkinson).



**Figure 23:** The BBC Leeds TV Newsroom, 1968 (source: author’s collection)

## PART THREE: BROADCASTERS, VIEWERS AND LISTENERS

### Chapter Six: BBC workers in Leeds - culture and practice

They have a right to know who we were, how our work was done, with what motives and with what results.<sup>1</sup>

Such a yearning after that golden time of creativity and pride in work...<sup>2</sup>

Of course, children, all this was before things were properly rationalised, and when they were, how pitiable it all seemed, except to those who were lucky enough to have experienced it in all its wayward brilliance.<sup>3</sup>

I may have rumbled and grumbled a lot during my years at the BBC but mostly I deeply enjoyed it. The product, mostly transmitted live to air, was a bit creaky. Sometimes unintentionally funny, even awful, but it had heart. Mine went into it.<sup>4</sup>

#### Introduction

Documentary producer Philip Donnellan, based in Birmingham for most of his BBC career, argued in his memoir that the BBC should be more accountable – that licence payers had the right to know more about those making programmes on their behalf as well as why programmes were made and the working practices employed. While the whole of this dissertation is to some extent an attempt to answer Donnellan's questions as they relate to those working for the BBC in the Yorkshire region, this chapter will use oral testimony and reminiscence to reflect the changes in cultures and practices of people employed by the Corporation in Leeds in a range of occupations.

Rob Perks has argued that oral history can, and should, contribute to the historical understanding of corporations: 'Organizations are made up of people, each with their own

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<sup>1</sup> Philip Donnellan, *We Were the BBC: An alternative view of a producer's responsibility 1948-1984*. Unpublished autobiography, 1988 held by Birmingham City Archives. Philip Donnellan is remembered as a radical filmmaker who pioneered the use of oral history in his films depicting the life of working people.

<sup>2</sup> Gardener and broadcaster Geoffrey Smith in BBC TV North staff, *Talented, difficult, cussed, lovely people*, 25.

<sup>3</sup> Freelance writer and presenter Brian Thompson, *ibid.*, 7.

<sup>4</sup> Contribution by former Regional Journalist John Irwin to Verguson and Coldrick (eds), *Rumbling and Grumbling: A Farewell to the BBC at Woodhouse Lane, Leeds*, 13.

personal biography but each organization has its own biography shaped both by its own people's biographies and the versions of itself that it creates for different purposes at different times.<sup>5</sup> It is the intention of this chapter to explore one such 'version' of the BBC. In Leeds as in other BBC regional studios, the relationship between the region and the organization's metropolitan centre had to be worked out in day-to-day practice. This chapter will suggest that, when looking back, BBC workers often describe that experience in terms of quality, craft and creativity.

### **'Who we were': BBC workers in Leeds 1945-1990**

While Oxbridge graduates have often been seen as predominant in the organization,<sup>6</sup> few found their way to the BBC in Yorkshire at this time. Indeed, the changing background of the Leeds station managers would seem to mirror wider developments in the BBC. Philip Fox, the station director from the launch of the Leeds-Bradford relay station in 1924 to his retirement in 1953, had, like the BBC's Director-General John Reith, been an officer in the First World War. But Philip Fox was also well connected locally – his father, Sir Robert Fox, was the Leeds Town Clerk.<sup>7</sup> Fox was succeeded as Representative, Yorkshire and Lincolnshire, by Ken Severs, a poet who had moved from the University of Leeds, where he had been studying for his doctorate, to a Talks Producer's job at the BBC. According to John Burns, the Leeds-based regional news reporter: 'Ken's contacts were legion and Ken liked a drink, and in his office at the end of the day there would always be some amazing character who you would give an arm and a leg to be in the company of... Writers, actors, performers, academics, it was an intellectual hotspot.'<sup>8</sup> As the job title suggests, the role of the BBC Representative was not to manage production staff but to promote the BBC within the region but that this was not always understood within the

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<sup>5</sup> Rob Perks, 'Corporations are People Too: Business and Corporate Oral History in Britain', *Oral History*, 38:1 (Spring 2010) 50

<sup>6</sup> Frank Webster, *Theories of the Information Society*, 3rd ed. (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006) 171; Simon J. Potter, *Broadcasting Empire: The BBC and the British World, 1922-1970* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012) 16.

<sup>7</sup> 'Ancestors of Peter Francis Jowers', accessed 1 November 2012, <http://familytreemaker.genealogy.com/users/j/o/w/Peter-F-Jowers/GENE20003.html>

<sup>8</sup> John Burns, interview, Lancaster, 11 April 2011

Corporation is evident in Severs' complaint to the region's Information Officer when BBC-2 was being rolled out:

...may I ask what the Yorkshire public think we have a BBC office for in Yorkshire. I can imagine the effect on a sturdy West or East Riding citizen (or MP) when he is told by a PBX<sup>9</sup> girl to telephone Manchester instead.<sup>10</sup>

Severs' reaction was the same four years later when he discovered that the roadshow 'Colour Comes to Town' would not be coming 'east of the Pennines' despite the many calls from television dealers being received by the Leeds office.<sup>11</sup> For Cindy Ritson, who joined BBC Leeds as a secretary in 1962, Severs behaved like the BBC's representative in the way he dressed and, with his office and secretary, 'in my eyes he was head of everything and I guess he was'.<sup>12</sup> But it is possible the job of the BBC Representative, 'taken backwards and forwards in a chauffeur driven car',<sup>13</sup> might have been seen as something of an anachronism by the 1960s. Without production staff to manage – radio staff who were based in Leeds served the programme requirements of Manchester and London or, as was the case with drama staff, followed their own agenda - there is evidence to suggest that Fox and Severs sometimes had to struggle to fill their time. Wilfred Pickles remembered visiting the Leeds studio during the War:

As there was no announcer in Leeds, Philip often had to take on the job himself and he disliked it intensely. He always seemed to be lonely in the studios, and whenever we went over from Manchester he was excited as a schoolboy and invariably insisted on making some sort of celebration out of our visits.<sup>14</sup>

In 1958 North Region Controller Robert Stead complained that Severs was spending his time reading incoming plays and this could interfere with his duties as Leeds Representative but it was also 'unprofessional' as Ken Severs lacked the 'real qualifications for judging Drama

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<sup>9</sup> The 'PBX girl' would answer outside calls and operate the internal switchboard.

<sup>10</sup> Severs to Information Officer North Region, 30 March 1963, 'North Region Publicity – General', WAC N25/445

<sup>11</sup> Severs to Controller North Region, 22 June 1967, 'North Region Publicity' 1966-1975, WAC R84/36/1

<sup>12</sup> Ritson, interview.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Wilfred Pickles, *Between You and Me: The Autobiography of Wilfred Pickles* (London: Werner Laurie, 1949) 124.

scripts'.<sup>15</sup> But the arrival of the regional television news unit in 1968 meant a change in the nature of management – from this point onwards journalists would always be in charge of the station.

The requirements of broadcasting in a place like Leeds meant that the BBC provided opportunities to its workers that they were unlikely to find in London or with another employer in the city. James Gregson, who had started his working life in a woollen mill at the age of twelve, did not come from a background that was in any way typical of the BBC but his experience as a stage dramatist, director and producer helped the BBC to establish itself as a broadcaster of regional drama, and in return the BBC gave Gregson the opportunity not only to establish a regional sound drama unit in Leeds but to define its role.<sup>16</sup> That, by 1958, Robert Stead was arguing that the reading of plays was a job best left to the professionals would seem to support Tom Burns' claim that by 1955 professionalism was a key value.<sup>17</sup> However, the small size of the Leeds station meant there was little demarcation with new recruits finding they were often expected to engage in activities that went far beyond any official job description. As a secretary working for the news team in 1964 Pat Pearson had to go out on location – she remembers having to sit astride the cameraman so he would not fall out of the car while tracking another vehicle with his camera.<sup>18</sup> Cindy Ritson, who came to the BBC from the Yorkshire Ladies Secretarial College, also went out on location with the news team as well as travelling around the country assisting *Gardeners' Question Time* producer Ken Ford.<sup>19</sup>

When it came to getting *Look North* on the air in 1968, for Area News Editor Bill Greaves, given the limited resources and less than adequate premises, it was still very much a matter of making it up as he went along. He remembers that the only way he could get graphic design for

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<sup>15</sup> Stead to CPO (S), 'Drama Department, Leeds'. 5 June 1958, 'North Region Drama Department – Organization and Establishment, 1958-1965', WAC N25/420/1

<sup>16</sup> See chapter two

<sup>17</sup> Tom Burns, *The BBC: Public Institution and Private World*. (London: Macmillan, 1977).

<sup>18</sup> Pearson, interview.

<sup>19</sup> Ritson, interview.

his programme was to use art school students on work experience;<sup>20</sup> Patrick Hargreaves, one of the students who found himself tracing maps and using *Letraset* at speed on a nightly basis, believes the students were accepted by the production team because they were ‘reasonably capable’.<sup>21</sup> Cindy Ritson, who in 1968 became the Area News Editor’s secretary, also found herself helping with the graphics as well as floor managing and winding the autocue. She remembers that there was little ‘demarcation’ between jobs but when she moved to YTV shortly afterwards she was grateful for the wide experience she had gained at the BBC, which she believes would not have been possible within the more unionised commercial station.<sup>22</sup>

Many of those who worked on *Look North* in its early years in Leeds recall the challenge of producing the programme in a church hall with the Brownies continuing to meet on the floor below. While Cindy Ritson was aware of the problems caused by the physical surroundings, she found she was unhappy in the news environment: ‘Every morning there was the meeting, and a lot of shouting all over the place deciding what to do. You either like that frenetic existence or you don’t... There was a lot of arguments and slamming of doors... Nothing ever seemed to go smoothly really,’ attributing this change in atmosphere to the ‘news edge’ which Bill Greaves and Assistant News Editor Jim Graham brought with them to the BBC in Leeds.<sup>23</sup> While the presentation of *Look North* from Manchester had been personality-led, centring on presenter Stuart Hall, Bill Greaves ‘wanted to make reporters the personalities but more than that they had to be reporters and they had to be experienced’.<sup>24</sup> From the beginning Greaves wanted the operation to be news-led and every journalist he recruited in 1968 for his new programme team had served their apprenticeship in newspapers. John Burns had, as a schoolboy, acted as a ‘penny liner’ phoning match reports into the local *Shipley Guardian* before joining the paper to

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<sup>20</sup> Greaves, interview.

<sup>21</sup> Hargreaves, interview; he remembers that it was his tutor at Leeds College of Art who was actually commissioned to provide the graphics.

<sup>22</sup> Ritson, interview.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Greaves, interview.

‘learn journalism the proper way’.<sup>25</sup> When 26-year-old David Seymour - the *Daily Mail*’s man in Yorkshire - was hired by Bill Greaves, he had no idea what the job involved.<sup>26</sup> The Assistant News Editor Jim Graham had, prior to his arrival in Leeds, succeeded Bill Greaves as News Editor at Border Television where, he remembers, ‘you did a little bit of everything even if you did it badly’.<sup>27</sup> Greaves, himself, had moved from Border to the BBC’s Current Affairs department at Lime Grove where he worked on the series *24 Hours* and on the 1966 General Election coverage as well as launching a news bulletin for BBC-2 before being sent to Leeds to get the new regional news magazine on the air<sup>28</sup>

That the production of television programmes required other skills in addition to journalism is indicated by a list of staff invited to the station’s opening night. Included are two Secretaries, two Production Assistants, two Film Editors, three Copytakers and an Assistant Floor Manager in addition to the four Reporters and the two Senior News Assistants responsible for the day-to-day running of the programme.<sup>29</sup> Both Production Assistants, who directed in the studio and occasionally out on location, had moved up from London. Doug Smith, who had joined the BBC at the age of sixteen working first on a wartime transmitter in his home city of Lincoln, had won a News Cameraman of the Year Award for his coverage of the conflict in Aden and a six-month production course provided him with the skills necessary to apply for the Leeds Production Assistant post.<sup>30</sup> Cambridge graduate Tony Cliff had worked on the *Sheffield Telegraph*, joining the BBC in London as a trainee TV producer before moving to Leeds.<sup>31</sup> Edward Croot had been working for the North Eastern Electricity Board when he answered an advert in *Amateur Cine World* for a Trainee Assistant Film Editor at Alexandra Palace, moving to Leeds as Film Editor

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<sup>25</sup> Burns, interview.

<sup>26</sup> Seymour, interview.

<sup>27</sup> Graham, interview.

<sup>28</sup> Greaves, interview.

<sup>29</sup> ‘Guest list for opening of TV Studios, Look North – 25.3.68’, ‘Leeds – Look North: 1964-1969’ WAC N25/38/1

<sup>30</sup> Smith, interview. The Aden Emergency lasted from 1962-1967

<sup>31</sup> Ken Blakeson, Andy Lynch, Dave Simpson, Chris Thompson, ‘Tony Cliff: BBC Radio Producer’, *Independent*, 28 March 2012; Philip Purser, ‘Tony Cliff obituary’, *Guardian*, 1 March 2012. Cliff’s time directing *Look North* is not referred to.

six weeks before the launch of *Look North*.<sup>32</sup> However, the broadcasting engineers, who amongst other things operated the studio cameras, were not included in the studio's opening 'guest list'. Looking back at the time of *Look North*'s twenty-fifth anniversary, Roger Dowling who had been the Engineer-In-Charge, described his colleagues:

The engineering crew was made up largely of former radio men (and one woman – Ada Green) who by a strange process called *integrated engineering* suddenly found that they were required to become talented television engineers, cameramen and sound balancers. The fact that such a dubious proposition would never have been entertained at Television Centre was enough to convince the production staff at Leeds that the concept was more to do with saving money than with the artistic quality of their programmes.<sup>33</sup>

Central to the newsgathering process were the film camera crews, all employed on a freelance basis. David Brierley moved from Manchester in 1963 when the BBC decided it needed a news cameraman to work with John Burns but found that 'the BBC in Leeds was very radio orientated. I remember the reporter of the day saying my priority is radio'.<sup>34</sup> David Brierley, like most of *Look North*'s cameramen in the early days, had started his career in stills photography, working in the darkroom of a Manchester photography firm that had seized every opportunity to offer both the BBC and Granada film of local news stories. Cameraman Paul Berriff had begun as a press photographer on the *Yorkshire Evening News*:

In those days newspapers were the main source of daily news. Each day I would be out on assignments photographing accidents, fires, babies, weddings and other local issues. It was a great learning curve into the world of photography... After four years learning the craft of photography I made the leap from newspapers into television – it was 1967. The late 60s started seeing the demise of newspapers as a source of breaking news. Television studios were opening up throughout the nation and could broadcast pictures almost immediately. I got a job as a news cameraman for BBC Television News based in Leeds. Although I took many pictures on each story the newspaper would only publish a single photograph. I saw television as a great breakthrough as all my pictures could be transmitted.<sup>35</sup>

As with the BBC's other regional stations, Leeds provided opportunities for those already working for the Corporation. Mike Robertson, spotting an advert in the *Radio Times*, abandoned

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<sup>32</sup> Croot, interview.

<sup>33</sup> Roger Dowling in *Talented, Difficult, Cussed, Lovely People*, 33.

<sup>34</sup> *The Men and their Movie Cameras* [DVD]

<sup>35</sup> 'About Paul Berriff', accessed 15 April 2013, [http://www.paulberriffproductions.com/about\\_paul\\_berriff.php](http://www.paulberriffproductions.com/about_paul_berriff.php), *Look North* cameraman Keith Massey began his career as a photographer on the same paper.



his degree course to join the BBC as a trainee Technical Operator in London in 1963, made possible because ‘the BBC in those days did not put much weight in qualifications. It was all to do with what you were capable of doing’. At the end of his training, and seeing few opportunities at that time within the BBC in London, he moved to Manchester where he became a television cameraman. Later, seeking production experience, he went on attachment to Leeds as a Station Assistant where he discovered that ‘the barriers in those days were few and far between...At the time it gave me some experience like floor management and direction which I probably wouldn’t have gained quite so quickly in Manchester and wouldn’t have gained in London’.<sup>36</sup> Bob Geoghegan’s first BBC job was at Ealing Studios as a Film Assistant Class 2 (the BBC’s term for projectionist) but having concluded that there was little possibility of advancement in London, he applied to BBC Birmingham, joining the BBC Midlands Film Unit as a Trainee Assistant Film Editor. Here he learned his craft working on film dramas and on documentaries, eventually moving to a Film Editor’s job in Leeds. Looking back, Bob Geoghegan comments: ‘I’m not sure I would ever have made it in London as an editor. I wouldn’t ever have had the opportunity to do other things in London and that’s what the regions gave me.’<sup>37</sup> But Bill Greaves also showed – even to those involved – that he was prepared to take risks when making appointments. Australian Patrick Taggart was collecting tickets at the Hammersmith Odeon when he got a three-month contract to work in Leeds. In Australia he had tried various television jobs including directing and ‘BBC regions were looking for Assistant Producers (we weren’t allowed to be called directors)’.<sup>38</sup> That two of his countrymen were already on the BBC Leeds staff suggests that the expansion of television in the English Regions in 1971 – the year Taggart came to Leeds – led to a need to recruit people with the experience not only to work on *Look North* but to produce and direct thirty-minute features, some of which

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<sup>36</sup> Robertson, interview.

<sup>37</sup> Geoghegan, interview.

<sup>38</sup> Taggart, email.

would be complete films. Doug Smith moved from *Look North* to work full-time as Features Producer and while future producer appointments were usually the result of promotion within the station, at least one producer was recruited because of his experience as a newspaper journalist to strengthen current affairs programming.<sup>39</sup> Alan Kassell had worked for the *Sheffield Star*<sup>40</sup> where past colleagues had included writer Peter Tinniswood, a relationship that would lead to future collaboration on films both for the region and network. By 1981 Patrick Hargreaves, whose first taste of the BBC had been as an art student helping to make graphics for *Look North*, was also working as a Features Producer alongside Doug Smith and Allan Kassell.<sup>41</sup>

While it might be possible for staff to negotiate ways of increasing their opportunities and experience at an individual level, the BBC offered training courses and attachments for those wanting to acquire new skills or move on to other parts of the Corporation, but such opportunities did not necessarily lead to a change of job. Finance Assistant Sue Pagdin believes the most interesting thing she did during her years at the BBC was an eight-day operational course for women: ‘I learned how to present, sound edit, operate cameras, vision mixing... That gave me a taste for other things. I wanted to be a vision mixer. Believe it or not I was in my early forties, and I was told I was too old and I believed that. I wouldn’t believe it now.’ She feels that the course did leave her feeling frustrated in her finance job but she regularly worked on phone-in programmes and did go on various attachments, including spending a year as a Production Assistant for BBC network radio, based in Manchester but also working occasionally in London.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Croot, interview.

<sup>40</sup> Edward Croot attributes Allan Kassell’s appointment to his newspaper experience but before coming to Leeds as a Features Producer Kassell had worked at BBC Radio Sheffield and the survival of a script of a programme where Kassell is the reporter (*From the North of England: 10: The Iron and Steel Industry Conference*, BBC Overseas Service, 11 July 1964, Sheffield Local History Library, MP1243n) shows he had done freelance work for BBC radio while still working for the *Sheffield Star*.

<sup>41</sup> Hargreaves, interview. Having joined the BBC as a Trainee Assistant Film Editor and working for BBC Sport, Patrick Hargreaves returned to BBC Leeds as an Assistant Film Editor.

<sup>42</sup> Sue Pagdin, interview with the author, Leeds, 10 December 2011

BBC Television in Leeds continued to recruit from newspapers, art colleges, secretarial schools and, increasingly, from local radio but one thing that did not seem to change was the number of women employed in anything other than an ancillary role. According to film editor Bob Geoghegan the station was ‘very masculine’:

We were very reliant on secretaries and PAs<sup>43</sup> and it wouldn’t have been acknowledged very much that programmes did rely on their expertise...I suppose under Bill [Greaves] it was an old newspaper thing that women had their place and the culture was that we didn’t have a female presenter for some time until Judith [Stamper] came along...And it was a long time before anybody else came along. It took a long time for the culture to change.<sup>44</sup>

Journalist Judith Stamper had worked for BBC Current Affairs in London but, arriving in Leeds in 1979, she found the workplace environment was very different: ‘As a woman the first thing that was striking about it was the macho culture. It was very chauvinistic; it was very northern. It was a bit like *Life on Mars*, the TV series, compared to metropolitan life and compared to the BBC in London’.<sup>45</sup> Bertha Lonsdale, writing in the late 1960s about her experience of working as a freelancer in the BBC North Region in both Manchester and Leeds, would have agreed:

...the B.B.C. is man-ridden. In the north it is positively clogging up with men. Perhaps this is partly the fault of us women and I am sure the men like it so. I refer, of course, to the planning and production side of programmes. I don’t think there has ever been more than two women producers working in the region at the same time and during some periods there has only been one.<sup>46</sup>

At a meeting of the Regional Advisory Council in 1976, a Mrs Wilson had asked regional manager Bill Greaves how reporters were recruited, commenting that it would be good to have a woman reporter in the region. Greaves replied that he was ‘always looking for a good woman reporter and had interviewed two recently’. He added that he was also intending to give ‘one woman’ experience as a continuity announcer.<sup>47</sup> However, when in 1968, continuity announcer Shirley Taylor was given the opportunity to be an ‘experimental reporter’ she remembers only

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<sup>43</sup> When the BBC Leeds TV studio opened in 1968, the job title of Production Assistant involved studio and film direction. A revision of job titles led to those engaged in this role being renamed Assistant Producers while producer’s secretaries became Production Assistants.

<sup>44</sup> Geoghegan, interview.

<sup>45</sup> Stamper, interview.

<sup>46</sup> Lonsdale, *They’d Taken the Tram Away*, 140.

<sup>47</sup> Regional Television Manager’s Report, North Advisory Council Minutes, 1976, WAC R78/66/1.

being given stories nobody else wanted to do, including riding around the town of Boston Spa on a penny-farthing ‘in little hot pants’.<sup>48</sup> And in 1980 when Judith Stamper was the only female television reporter working at the BBC in Leeds, she remembers the News Editor telling her, ‘we don’t have too many soft stories for women around here. You wouldn’t want to go down a coal mine’, yet she had previously travelled around the world while working as an Assistant Producer on *Newsnight* and had, indeed, been down a coal mine.<sup>49</sup>

It was at this time that Lesley Hilton, working as a ‘freelance mute camera operator and journalist’, started to work as a stringer for the BBC Leeds newsroom, but it is unlikely this would have happened if it had not been for YTV. Having worked in the past on community video projects and for Granada, Hilton rang *Calendar* to complain they rarely covered stories in Hebden Bridge where she lived. Having been told by the News Editor that it was because they had no one to cover the area, she remembers responding, ‘Well, I’m here and I’ve got an ACTT (Association of Cinema and Television Technicians) card’. Without this, regardless of gender, she would not have been able to work for YTV and jobs for *Look North* followed. ‘There were times’, she says, ‘when I was actually doing the same story for both of them and they did not like that’.<sup>50</sup> That television was still very much seen as a male world, as far as its production was concerned, is suggested by a profile of Hilton in the *Yorkshire Post* with the headline ‘Female focus on the TV world for TV camera operator in Yorkshire’.<sup>51</sup> As far as working alongside her fellow stringers was concerned, territory – which was jealously guarded – was more likely to result in being ‘warned off’ than any issues relating to gender. And not only cameramen but members of the public were frequently surprised to see a woman shooting television film footage; on one occasion, Hilton recalls, ‘outside this factory, holding my camera and the guy

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<sup>48</sup> *The Look North Years: 1968*, BNT Productions, BBC4, 2004.

<sup>49</sup> Stamper, interview.

<sup>50</sup> Lesley Hilton, interview with author, Leeds, 8 October 2013.

<sup>51</sup> *Yorkshire Post*, 25 February 1980. See also Lesley Hilton, ‘Knee Deep in Murky Water: A Camerawoman’s Diary’, *Film and Television Technician*, July 1980, 6.

who was the factory manager came out and said, “When’s the cameraman coming?” and I said, “What do you think this is? A handbag!”<sup>52</sup>

Although other women journalists did join the BBC Leeds newsroom during the period covered by this study, and there were several female researchers, there is no instance of a woman producing a feature programme. Senior Features Producer Doug Smith comments: ‘I suppose we just took people that we knew. Ladies gradually came in and there would have been no bar to ladies. I mean we had lady presenters very soon and if we could have lady reporters we’d have been very pleased to have them but maybe we just didn’t know of them’.<sup>53</sup> And when *Look North* did get its first female presenter, Judith Stamper in 1984, she felt she was forced into the presenting role because the main presenter had left: ‘I didn’t enjoy the role to start with, I didn’t feel I was that good at it for one thing, and I wasn’t doing anything all day because we weren’t to go off reporting because we had to be ready for the programme in the evening’. She decided to specialize in the ‘hard’ or political interview, using her time in the studio for research and in this way she could engage with the big news stories, and continue to fulfil her role as a journalist, ‘asking the difficult questions’.<sup>54</sup>

While BBC Radio Leeds’ manager Phil Sidey was determined that his station should produce its own news, emphasizing the need to employ good journalists,<sup>55</sup> his desire to open up the radio station to local people may have led to more diversity and created more opportunities than could be found in television.<sup>56</sup> The very first voice to be heard on Radio Leeds was that of a woman, Liz Ambler. A search through the *Radio Times* listings for Radio Leeds in 1971<sup>57</sup> suggests that very few women were involved in the presentation and production of the station’s programmes

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<sup>52</sup> Hilton, interview.

<sup>53</sup> Smith, interview.

<sup>54</sup> Stamper, interview.

<sup>55</sup> See above, chapter one.

<sup>56</sup> BBC Radio Leeds’ accessibility to its audience will be explored in the next chapter.

<sup>57</sup> Different editions of the *Radio Times* were produced for the different TV regions and subsequently for local radio stations. The schedules for the early 1970s are particularly detailed. However, the only surviving run of the magazine relating to the Yorkshire region is held by Bradford Central Library and, although the holdings start in the 1950s, 1971 is the first year the Library received the Radio Leeds edition.

but BBC local radio did provide university-educated women with a pathway into broadcast journalism. Lis Howell, who joined Radio Leeds as a news reporter and producer in 1973, would become Managing Editor of Sky News,<sup>58</sup> while Helen Boaden who also started as a news reporter at Radio Leeds was appointed Director, BBC News in 2004.<sup>59</sup> Judith Stamper had also started her broadcasting career in local radio but at BBC Radio Carlisle.<sup>60</sup> The emphasis on sport across local radio also provided opportunities for those with no previous experience of broadcasting or journalism. Still working full-time as a history teacher, Harry Gration was presenting sports programmes for Radio Leeds until 1978 when the station offered him a three-month contract to work on news and sport.<sup>61</sup> By 1984 he was presenting *Look North* alongside Judith Stamper. And as with sport, religious involvement could also lead to a career in broadcasting. In 1968 Methodist minister Frank Pagden was seconded to Radio Leeds to advise on the new station's religious broadcasting and within a few years had moved into a BBC staff job producing across the station's output.<sup>62</sup> The 1971 White Paper on radio broadcasting had emphasized the role BBC Local Radio should play in providing minority programming,<sup>63</sup> Radio Leeds provided programmes for the district's Asian and African-Caribbean communities. *Jhalak*, aimed at people in Leeds and Bradford who had 'cultural roots' in the Indian sub-continent, was originally transmitted in Hindustani when it began in November 1970, 'produced by the Asian people themselves'.<sup>64</sup> Later the programme was transmitted in Urdu and Punjabi from the Bradford studio but away from most of Radio Leeds' staff.

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<sup>58</sup> City University, London: Staff Profiles, accessed 12 April 2013, <http://www.city.ac.uk/arts-social-sciences/academic-staff-profiles/lis-howell>

<sup>59</sup> Inside the BBC, accessed 12 April 2013, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/aboutthebbc/insidethebbc/managementstructure/biographies/boaden>.

<sup>60</sup> Stamper, interview. Radio Carlisle was renamed BBC Radio Cumbria in 1982.

<sup>61</sup> Gration, *Yorkshire Sporting Heroes*, 2.

<sup>62</sup> 'Rev Frank Pagden: Leeds mourns radio vicar' *Yorkshire Evening Post*, 21 March 2011.

<sup>63</sup> Ministry of Post and Telecommunications, *An Alternative Service of Radio Broadcasting* (Cmnd 4636, HMSO, 1971)

<sup>64</sup> Inder Jit Manrai, 'A vision of life', *Radio Times*, 5 August 1971, 4. For BBC Radio Leicester's earlier programming for listeners who had come to the UK from the sub-continent see Linfoot, *A History of BBC Local Radio in England*, 63.

For some it was simply their persistence that led to a permanent job in local radio. Six weeks after BBC Radio Leeds went on air, Nigel Fell took in an interview he had recorded with a friend. He believes that technical ability was ‘in short supply’ and his helping out led to paid employment and eventually to a Station Assistant’s job.<sup>65</sup> Nigel Fell’s father had worked for the BBC, as had the fathers of two other people interviewed for this study. And according to Jean Auty, who joined the BBC as an ‘office girl’ in 1945: ‘By 1956 the staff in Leeds had just about doubled to forty – about a dozen of us being inter-married – we hadn’t time to go out to meet anyone else.’<sup>66</sup> At least one respondent remembers BBC Leeds in the 1980s as being ‘a big family’,<sup>67</sup> a feeling which was probably reinforced by the presence of a canteen and a branch of the BBC Club with its own bar on the premises.<sup>68</sup> But the making of television programmes had to be a cooperative process and the relationship between those with different crafts and skills had to be worked out in the course of production, sometimes resulting in feelings of fulfilment and frustration – often expressed in terms of quality and creativity – which, as the next section will show, were still being felt by BBC Leeds staff long after they left the Corporation.

### **‘How our work was done’: craft and creativity**

In his 1989 analysis of regional news across the media, Alastair Hetherington provides a snapshot of Yorkshire newsrooms towards the end of the period discussed here. Noting the uncertainty amongst Radio Leeds staff at a time when BBC Local Radio budgets were being cut by ten percent, he observed that, ‘the youth and enthusiasm of many of the journalists and supporting staff at Radio Leeds were impressive. They had devotion and self-confidence’.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Fell, interview. He had previously worked on the pirate station Radio City using the pseudonym ‘John Reith’.

<sup>66</sup> Jean Auty, notes and interview with author, Silkstone, 14 October 2011

<sup>67</sup> Pagdin, interview.

<sup>68</sup> However, the BBC Leeds Club minutes (courtesy of Lucy Smickersgill, BBC Yorkshire) indicate that in 1968 there was some reluctance to allow Radio Leeds staff full membership while those working for regional television were accepted without hesitation.

<sup>69</sup> Hetherington, *News in the Regions*, 18.

Moving on to television, he noted that *Look North* employed seventeen journalists and used four video crews (two in Leeds, one in Huddersfield and one in Sheffield) while also making limited use of freelance 'single-man' units.<sup>70</sup> But in comparing news priorities in the *Look North* newsroom with that of YTV's news magazine *Calendar* over a five-day period in January 1988 as well as a detailed analysis of one day's newsroom activity and output, Hetherington understandably provides what is very much the journalist's tale.<sup>71</sup>

Certainly journalists working in local radio found they were required to be multi-skilled.

John Helm, Radio Leeds Sports Editor between 1970 and 1975, discovered that he was expected to contribute across the station's programming:

Although I was the Sports Editor I also had to do some news as well. I used to get involved on election nights...but also I sometimes used to present the morning programme and I had to be a bit of a disc jockey as well, doing the evening magazine programmes so I had to learn to play records...so although I was being channelled into sports I had to retain an interest in news.

Formerly a newspaper journalist, he very quickly had to acquire radio skills, starting with learning how to find his way around the Uher reel-to-reel tape recorder used to record interviews on location:

Most of us broadcast, and most of us edited our own tapes as well. We used to go out, do the interview, bring the tape back, cut it and then broadcast it as well...I even had to learn to plug up [the studio desk] to do interviews and I'm not a technical man by any means. It was a great grounding.<sup>72</sup>

But the processes involved in making television programmes were very different with journalists and producers depending on the support of colleagues with craft skills.

Working with film cameramen and editors introduced David Seymour to the grammar of television production:

It stood me in good stead because I learned a lot about the process of making television, and in the end I became a producer and went on to have a different kind of career in the BBC, but it all dated back to what I learned working with those handful of people in broadcasting in Leeds in the early days of BBC North.

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid, 17. There is no evidence to suggest that the BBC ever based a camera crew in Huddersfield.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid, Chapter Five.

<sup>72</sup> John Helm, interview with author, Saltaire, 14 November 2011.



The cutting room provided the best schoolroom: ‘You could see all your mistakes there – you could see how you couldn’t put certain pictures together because they didn’t fit and you saw what made a really good sequence’. And, he feels, the TV directors fulfilled a valuable role in ‘bridging the gap between the editorial and technical side’.<sup>73</sup> Judith Stamper, who is referred to in Hetherington’s study, is still mindful of the role camera crews played in the look and appeal of programmes, especially in those ‘crafted pieces that were the trademark of regional television’:

When you went into the edit suite you would suddenly find some fantastic pictures of things that you wanted to bring in... There would be wonderful cutaway shots that these cameramen had noticed of a baby eating an ice cream, of a bird, of a cat wandering around the corner and that gave it such a feel of place which was very important indeed, but each cameraman had his own trademark, and, yes, they were all male. There were the Keith Masseys of this world who could have shot cinema, it was so beautiful. Keith’s use of light was extraordinary. Dave Brierley was the one with the cats and the dogs and the babies.

She also pays tribute to Paul Berriff, describing him as an ‘ambulance chaser’ but whose sense of news, and the drama of news, was ‘in his head all the time’.<sup>74</sup>

Several interviewees described the stages which had to be gone through daily in producing *Look North* from newsgathering to output, and this is probably because from 1968 to 1984 production activity was determined by the shooting and getting back to the station of 16mm film, followed by its processing, editing and the assembly of a film roll for live transmission. Because of this, trust between colleagues was essential. According to film editor Bob Geoghegan, reporters would tend to explain the story idea, leaving the editor to select shots and make a rough ‘assembly’ of the material while the reporter was writing the script. He adds: ‘I never liked cutting to the bed of a commentary. I found it too restrictive.’<sup>75</sup> And as the reporters tended to place their trust in the editors, so the programme producers had to trust the reporters to cut the stories with the editors. Judith Stamper remembers: ‘The reporter in the field was left to his or

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<sup>73</sup> Seymour, interview.

<sup>74</sup> Stamper, interview.

<sup>75</sup> Geoghegan, interview.

her devices, and the same with the script and the editing. I never felt pressured really'.<sup>76</sup> Very often the first time the *Look North* producer viewed the film item was when it was transmitted and frequently the length of an item seemed to be more important than its content – one Assistant News Editor was famous for shouting: 'What does it make, matey?' On one occasion an item on the outlaw Robin Hood was twenty-four minutes long allowing only a few minutes for news items at the top of the programme.<sup>77</sup> And David Seymour suggests that there had to be much more trust then because the news magazine was live, and scripts also had to be voiced live.<sup>78</sup>

In practice the trust put in the film editors did go beyond the cutting of stories. Film editor Edward Croot remembers being 'allowed out' to make items for *Look North*, including a series with gardener Geoffrey Smith which was also the first time the station used colour film.<sup>79</sup> Having had his idea for three full-length programmes on Yorkshire comedians accepted for production, Bob Geoghegan accompanied the producer and film crew when they went out to record the interviews but, in any case, when it came to thirty-minute features the film editor would be involved in the project even before the beginning of the four or five week production run.<sup>80</sup> Film editing gave Patrick Hargreaves experience in assessing what was and was not feasible, and in telling a story which proved to be a valuable 'learning route' on the way to production.<sup>81</sup>

According to Edward Croot, one of *Look North*'s two original film editors, the equipment in Leeds was the worst in the BBC, 'supplied very much in the spirit of make up and mend'; in addition the church hall in which the television staff were working was very dusty and as the telecine machine<sup>82</sup> was outside in the yard, it was always a struggle to keep the film clean. He believes it was only by working around these conditions and through the 'dedication' of the

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<sup>76</sup> Stamper, interview.

<sup>77</sup> Geoghegan, interview.

<sup>78</sup> Seymour, interview.

<sup>79</sup> Croot, interview.

<sup>80</sup> Geoghegan, interview.

<sup>81</sup> Hargreaves, interview.

<sup>82</sup> A telecine machine converts film images into an electronic format for recording or transmission

station's engineers that they kept on air.<sup>83</sup> Engineer Roger Dowling also described the building as unsuitable: 'The technical problems were formidable: it was often necessary to de-rig the studio after *Look North* at around 6.30, re-rig for an opt-out between 7.00 and 10.30 and finally de-rig and re-install the self-drive presentation desk just in time for Brian Baines's closedown news bulletin at around midnight.'<sup>84</sup> And, as with programme content, creativity can also be identified in the solutions BBC staff arrived at, not only to keep things running from day to day but also to extend what was possible. In the 1960s Studio Manager Geoff Wilkinson had adapted the Leeds radio drama studio to enable stereo transmission and recording,<sup>85</sup> and in the 1980s Video Editor Andrew Dobson built the station's PSC transmission suite in his spare time.<sup>86</sup> But, while there may have a feeling that things were achieved despite the BBC in London, being part of the bigger BBC also allowed Leeds production staff to realise some of their own ideas. Thus, in 1976 when adapting the format of Jimmy Savile's radio *Speakeasy* series for television, the Leeds television team were faced with the problem of fitting a large audience into a studio that was never envisaged to accommodate 150 people. A tower was designed and built locally to capture the best quality sound and OB cameras, normally used in sports grounds, were borrowed from London and Manchester to enable every member of the studio audience to be seen and heard.<sup>87</sup> Specialist expertise was also there to be called on – on one occasion a BBC armourer came up from London to assist with filming a sequence at a Lincolnshire airfield used by RAF crews during the Second World War.<sup>88</sup> But most of what could be achieved in the way of programme production in Leeds depended on financial decisions taken centrally by the BBC. When, shortly after its tenth anniversary, Radio Leeds moved to the BBC's Woodhouse Lane studios, Nigel Fell recalls: 'We had won the battle with London to get it [Studio 2, formerly the

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<sup>83</sup> Croot, interview.

<sup>84</sup> *Talented, difficult, cussed, lovely people*, 34. Brian Baines was the best known of the region's team of continuity announcers who, originally in vision, closed down BBC1 North on weekday nights.

<sup>85</sup> Wilkinson, interview.

<sup>86</sup> Dobson, interview. PSC working meant that footage was shot on video cassettes.

<sup>87</sup> Robertson, interview.

<sup>88</sup> Smith, interview.

radio drama studio] equipped properly. At last we could record, or broadcast live, audience shows, quizzes, and music of almost every description.’<sup>89</sup>

While regional manager Bill Greaves identifies the appointment of accountant Michael Checkland to the post of D-G in 1987 with ‘the end of the glorious creative BBC’, for film editors like Bob Geoghegan the change came earlier in the decade with the shift from film to cassette-based electronic newsgathering which not only changed the way material was edited but also the working relationship between journalists and film editors. Reporters were now able to record their commentary in advance of the edit.<sup>90</sup> According to Edward Croot programme directors were becoming more proscriptive – previously it was a matter of working together but ‘now you were told’, and this was not just a consequence of using new technology. It seemed to the editors that journalists who came to the Leeds TV newsroom from local radio often wrote their scripts first before even viewing the material. Edward Croot discovered that, compared with film, PSC editing did have some advantages, especially with regard to speed and sound, but analogue tape editing was a linear process, making it much more difficult to move around shots.<sup>91</sup> Bob Geoghegan agrees: ‘You could manipulate film so easily...whereas with VT it was a bit awesome at first and you had to structure it on paper, work out your timings and edit it and that’s what went out...You lost quite a lot of control as the medium changed.’ And the loss of control was also perceived to be a loss in creativity: ‘I felt it didn’t allow me as an editor to be creative. It also meant that the reporter gave you the structure rather than me putting my ideas and structure on it.’<sup>92</sup> But because ENG was relatively instantaneous (tapes still had to be biked back to the studio), reporters could be sent out to do more stories and, according to reporter and

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<sup>89</sup> Nigel Fell in Verguson and Coldrick (eds.) *Rumbling and Grumbling*, 53.

<sup>90</sup> Geoghegan, interview

<sup>91</sup> Croot, interview.

<sup>92</sup> Geoghegan, interview. In Leeds PSC shooting for *Look North*, and some feature programmes, was gradually phased in during 1984 as it depended on the freelance cameramen purchasing new cameras.

presenter Judith Stamper, rather than crafted news packages containing analysis and assessment, stories became more formulaic in their presentation.<sup>93</sup>

Initially there were concerns about the quality of material shot on PSC, largely due to the capabilities of the u-matic cassettes that were used. Andrew Dobson explains:

The u-matic was a colour under-type recording where the bandwidth was limited, so the picture quality was limited. If it wasn't treated with care the results were soft - damaged pictures which were never recoverable so there was a quality issue. As time went on the u-matic was replaced by Betacam SP, which was better and more forgiving although still not as pristine as the one-inch recordings [used] for studio work.<sup>94</sup>

U-matic footage could be copied much more easily and cheaply than had been the case with film and that was particularly useful for news stories. As the picture quality deteriorated every time the footage was copied, feature programmes would often be edited using VHS copies which then had to be conformed with the original u-matic footage to produce the edited programme for transmission. Although many of the technical issues disappeared with the introduction of Betacam SP, Andrew Dobson echoes Judith Stamper when he comments: 'Although the gear was great...it also allowed people to do more things in a less planned state. Some of the quality went out of the window because you shoot and shoot and shoot, and you can make something but that is a way of doing it without planning and not always a good thing.'<sup>95</sup>

Although the posts of Film and VT Editors would eventually merge to become that of Picture Editor, in Leeds the introduction of PSC originally seems to have led to contention between the two crafts. VT editors, like Andrew Dobson, tended to come from a broadcast engineering background. Having built the Leeds PSC transmission suite, Andrew Dobson found this particularly frustrating:

There was some common ground to be had in the evolution of ENG/PSC editing in the regions. The common ground was that the conventional videotape editors had the broadcast experience of playing it in, editing it and maintaining technical standards. The film editors had great skills from

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<sup>93</sup> Stamper, interview.

<sup>94</sup> Dobson, interview. Sony first introduced the u-matic cassette in 1969 and the Betacam SP (Superior Performance) cassette in 1986, the latter rapidly establishing itself as the professional video format.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

a composition, timing, structural point of view but they were weak technically. So along comes this new technology which could have been the common ground which brought everybody together, and from the outset we could have helped the film editors, the film editors could have helped us, the electronic editors, but the film editors somehow got the management to keep the electronic editors off the ENG, or PSC, as it was known so we could only edit videotape whereas the film editors for about a year and a half could edit film and PSC.<sup>96</sup>

In practice this meant that the videotape editors were restricted to editing material recorded in the studio. Feeling frustrated by workplace politics, Andrew Dobson left the BBC.<sup>97</sup> But even within the same craft group there could be differences about ways of working. The allocation of a second opt-out feature programme slot to the English Regions in 1976 brought more production staff to Leeds. Whereas Film Editor Edward Croot had come to Leeds from BBC News at Alexandra Palace, his new colleagues had served their apprenticeships working on network documentaries and drama as Assistant Film Editors within BBC Film Units. He found that their approach was very different – more time was spent viewing material and feature programmes could now take five weeks to edit, and he still wonders if the viewer noticed any difference in quality.<sup>98</sup> Bob Geoghegan certainly remembers being frustrated by some of the working methods being used when he arrived in Leeds, suggesting various changes, and being supported by an editing colleague who had worked on the documentary series, *Horizon*.<sup>99</sup> In arguing that programme making in Leeds should be approached in the same way as it would be in London or at the Network Production Centre at the BBC in Birmingham, there was also the suggestion that these were places where standards had been defined which could then be presented in Leeds as the professional way of doing things.

Despite the changes in working methods brought about by PSC, film continued to be used until 1989 for both regional and network TV features. Some of the films made at this time were amongst the most ambitious ever produced by the BBC in Leeds, ranging from the award-winning *Paper Kisses*, described by its producer as ‘the near as Leeds as a station has ever come

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Dobson, interview.

<sup>98</sup> Croot, interview.

<sup>99</sup> Geoghegan, interview.

to pure drama'<sup>100</sup> to series commissioned for network transmission including a six-part series on the history of social housing, *The Home Front*, and four programmes in which writer Peter Tinniswood presented a very personal view of his favourite places.<sup>101</sup> While it would be incorrect to say that there were two cultures existing at this time within the Leeds television team – the activity of the station was far too news-based and news and issue-led topics were included in the general mix of features - producer Patrick Hargreaves was not alone in thinking that feature programmes provided a greater opportunity for creativity and there was also the possibility that, depending on their subject, they might later be given a national network slot. News Editor Jim Graham reflects on his own journey from news to documentary programmes starting with some of the people he encountered in Leeds:

...Alan Ayckbourn and Trevor [Griffiths] who wrote *Reds*, and sitting with people like that, theatrical people because they were great raconteurs and I'd never envisaged talking to intellectuals, radio people, playwrights, how they interpreted life, not as news film on a screen but they wrote it as drama and that changed my view of a lot of things...I moved away from news. News is a record of mishap. A thousand trains go from Preston to London comfortably, no news. One crashes, world news. I worked out that if you wanted to interpret life, and I wanted to do that, news is not the way. It's very, very important. It's the bulwark of democracy but it's not the creative side so I went into current affairs.<sup>102</sup>

Oral historian Paul Thompson has pointed out that, as a concept, creativity is 'confusingly complex. There is no single authoritative definition',<sup>103</sup> but the *Oxford English Dictionary's* reference to 'the *ability or power to create*' (my emphases)<sup>104</sup> is helpful in understanding comments made by the contributors to this study: not only the freedom to determine what programmes could be made as in the case of Regional Head Bill Greaves, but also play some part in how they were made. This is particularly the case when such 'ability' is perceived to have been lost. For Patrick Hargreaves the most frustrating time in his BBC career was when the 'whole thing came to a shuddering halt in the 1980s' under Michael Checkland and John

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<sup>100</sup> Hargreaves, interview. An earlier drama, *And Peppermint...* which, unlike *Paper Kisses*, had no factual basis was transmitted in 1976.

<sup>101</sup> See above, chapter four

<sup>102</sup> Graham, interview.

<sup>103</sup> Paul Thompson, 'Community and Creativity: A Life Stories Perspective', *Oral History*, 37 (2009) 2, 35.

<sup>104</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary*, accessed 1 March 2013, <http://www.oed.com/viewdictionaryentry/Entry/44075>

Birt, seeming to offer only a future when production would be restricted to news and current affairs.<sup>105</sup> Although this change in direction affected all the English Regions, it was particularly felt in Leeds where from 1986-1989 regional television staff were also making programmes directly for the network. Bob Geoghegan, who had worked almost entirely cutting features on film in the year leading up to these changes, found himself working for long stints at a time on *Look North* and feeling very much that his strengths were being wasted which was something he had not anticipated when he went to work in a region. But even within regional news, journalists too felt more constrained as presenter Judith Stamper explains:

Everything was more structured and much more homogeneous, and across the regions, which wasn't a help for regionalisation. All the sets had to be the same, no fluffy stories as he [John Birt] called them. None of those handcrafted features – just hard news. The tug and barge approach – where you had a lead story, then you had a backgrounder, then you had an interview... We were watched, I think, nationally and regionally to make sure we weren't doing anything too controversial, especially if we were coming up to a licence fee renewal or the Charter, that was always a problem.<sup>106</sup>

In BBC local radio, too, the emphasis shifted to news and to talk but for Production Assistant Nigel Fell who worked at Radio Leeds from 1968 to 1998, the first two years were the most fulfilling. The station had not yet moved over from 'built' programmes which required more team work to 'sequence broadcasting'<sup>107</sup> but by 1970 BBC Local Radio was no longer just an experiment and its first station manager Phil Sidey had moved on:

In the first couple of years we indulged in a lot of buffoonery to get publicity... There wasn't such a thing as a marketing budget. [There was] a lot of indifference in the BBC, if not hostility, so we made as much noise as we could with various pranks that stopped in 1970. We became a more serious station. We always were serious in lots of respects but the new management didn't have much time for any entertainment at all and some would say our programmes became dull and boring.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Hargreaves, interview.

<sup>106</sup> Stamper, interview.

<sup>107</sup> 'Built' programmes dealt with specific subjects and tended to be aimed at specific audiences while 'sequence' programmes are live, usually longer and are constructed around a named presenter.

<sup>108</sup> Fell, interview.



How the work of the BBC radio drama team in Leeds was carried across into the pubs in the city,<sup>109</sup> and elsewhere in the region, has already been referred to, but several contributors to this study have talked about the role pubs and drink played in the way their work was carried out. Nigel Fell remembers: ‘In the early days we used to live in each other’s pockets an awful lot, and come lunchtime we would all go into the pub and we would be discussing ideas all the time there, or sometimes over breakfast in the Merrion Centre or sometimes in the evening and ideas would get thrown around and worked on like that’.<sup>110</sup> But this way of working also took its toll on people’s lives. According to David Seymour, at the time he was working at the BBC in Leeds: ‘Hard drinking went very much with journalism, and with broadcast journalism [because] we worked under great pressure, and we worked very hard, and we lived hard as well’, but this way of life also led to casualties including one of his closest friends.<sup>111</sup> Patrick Hargreaves remembers how the social life amongst the television team evolved at the same time as the scope of the programmes expanded:

The social side of it was very magnetic, and to this day in a sense I have some regrets in that it was a time when I had a young family growing up, and being totally immersed in the work and the social side of it. There was a bar on the BBC premises, and you would have conversations about projects, and very useful things were decided by going to the bar and having these conversations. That whole evolution process was tremendous because it was your life bound up in work. I feel fortunate in being part of the BBC at that time but it did have a toll on family life and so on.<sup>112</sup>

And while those interviewed talk about their former colleagues in a very positive sense, there are also references to different craft groups sitting together in the canteen and engineers, in particular, tending to keep to themselves. As with any workplace there would have been those who felt excluded. As a Further Education Officer for the Schools Broadcasting Council,<sup>113</sup> but working from the BBC’s Leeds office, Trevor Griffiths didn’t feel part of the BBC in the same

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<sup>109</sup> See chapter two.

<sup>110</sup> Fell, interview.

<sup>111</sup> Seymour, interview.

<sup>112</sup> Hargreaves, interview.

<sup>113</sup> The Schools Broadcasting Council had been created by the BBC to liaise with teachers concerning the content of its programmes for schools.

way as he might have done had he been part of the Radio Drama Department in the same building.<sup>114</sup> Nor, for the first ten years when they were in separate buildings, was there much communication between Radio Leeds staff and their TV and network radio colleagues.

### **‘With what motives’: BBC values**

When sociologist Tom Burns revisited the BBC in 1973, having originally recorded interviews with members of staff ten years earlier, he noticed people were more likely to talk in terms of working in the ‘industry’<sup>115</sup> but it was perhaps the case that for those working away from London being part of a much bigger institution was an important component of the identity they derived from their work – you might be in Leeds but you belonged to something of global importance perceived to be acting in the public interest. Reporter David Seymour reflects when he moved to the BBC in Leeds from the *Daily Mail*:

I liked the values of the BBC. It was much more like working in the interest of the audience, the public. I didn’t have to spin a yarn as it were. I didn’t have to take a line or an angle. The idea was trying to get the truth of things, and to provide a decent service for the audience so I took to that very much...reliability, accuracy, impartiality, objectivity – all these were instilled by Bill Greaves and others right from the word go, so the idea was to provide a useful service rather than get the best possible story, the best possible angle. As a national newspaper reporter, our training was very different. It was to be the opposition. It was to get angled stories, exclusive material that other colleagues didn’t have. There was an element of that in the BBC, being sharply competitive, but to repeat, the accuracy and objectivity came first.<sup>116</sup>

This reputation for accuracy and objectivity was derived from the BBC’s existence as a trusted and respected national institution,<sup>117</sup> but by being there, the news team was also carrying out the BBC’s obligations to the region as Helen Thomas, Head of Regional and Local Programmes for BBC Yorkshire, explains:

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<sup>114</sup> Griffiths, interview. Griffiths, who went on to become one of the country’s leading dramatists, says he had already started to write television plays during his time at the BBC. Senior drama producer Alfred Bradley was both a neighbour and close personal friend. Griffiths was also chairman of the BBC Leeds Club for a time.

<sup>115</sup> Burns, *The BBC: Public Institution and Private World*, 213

<sup>116</sup> Seymour, interview.

<sup>117</sup> See Steven Barnett and Jean Seaton, ‘Why the BBC matters: Memo to the New Parliament about a Unique British Institution’, *The Political Quarterly*, 81 (3) July-September 2010.

It's vital that we are the people in the region holding companies to account, organizations to account on behalf of the local population. Being there when people are experiencing hard times. Cockermouth, more recently is a good example. I mean the floods there in 2007. We are here as a local and regional broadcaster before stories like that happen, when stories like that happen and after stories like that go away. We are here in good times and bad, and we're their voice, and licence fee payers, I think in any geographic area, deserve a voice, and we strive to be that voice.<sup>118</sup>

Although the example given here is from 2007, the BBC has long been seen as a reliable source of public information – in particular, local radio stations had established themselves from the beginning as reliable sources of emergency information.<sup>119</sup>

Providing a public service was more difficult to define in relation to the features programmes but this could be achieved by presenting regional viewers with a mix of programmes of 'general interest'.<sup>120</sup> Within this mix producers could justify programme ideas they thought to be interesting as providing a service for those viewers who already had an interest in the specific subject, while also hopefully attracting a broader audience. This Reithian approach meant that chances were sometimes taken when programmes were commissioned and producer Patrick Hargreaves describes the two series made on contemporary dance, *Class* and *Making Moves*,<sup>121</sup> as being 'public service' as well as providing a 'platform for creativity'.<sup>122</sup>

Talking more generally, Patrick Hargreaves praises regional manager Bill Greaves for having 'had incredible vision in what he wanted to see in these special programmes' but Bill Greaves sees himself as acting in accordance with the BBC at that time which was 'led by the creative thrust'.<sup>123</sup> In his 2004 exploration of the impact of management on creativity within the BBC, Stuart MacDonald comments: 'Creativity requires "intrinsic motivation". This is professionalism, by which is meant the proclivity to act towards a greater good, a proclivity that

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<sup>118</sup> Helen Thomas, interview with the author, Leeds, 2 December 2009. In the 1980s Helen Thomas worked in commercial local radio in Leeds before joining BBC Radio York as a producer in 1985.

<sup>119</sup> Linfoot, *A History of BBC Local Radio in England*, 183.

<sup>120</sup> See above, chapter four

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> Hargreaves, interview.

<sup>123</sup> Greaves, interview.

should be inherent in public service broadcasting,<sup>124</sup> and, in concluding his argument, quotes from an interview Tom Burns recorded with a BBC personnel officer in 1963 as it appears in a 1995 work by Burns:

‘My job is to encourage attitudes which will pull out of the staff more than you could justify by any criteria which exist, say, in the business world... What you have in mind... is to get the best out of people. This is an increment you don’t pay for’ (later on he went so far as to say that it was ‘something management isn’t entitled to’) ‘and because of that it is invaluable’.<sup>125</sup>

For Nigel Fell in his first two years at Radio Leeds, ‘the staff worked tremendously long hours and were glad to do it because they were having a ball’.<sup>126</sup> *Look North* presenter and reporter Judith Stamper remembers: ‘People would argue over their work. They would spend time on it. They would spend time after work on it. They would talk about it. It was, I think, an interesting time in television making.’<sup>127</sup> And film editor Bob Geoghegan looks back to a time when, ‘I never bothered to fill in a time sheet because we were having so much fun’.<sup>128</sup>

As has been shown, many of the contributors to this study were concerned about programme quality but the concept of quality, except in a technical sense, is even more difficult to define than that of creativity. It is a term which features in any debate about public service broadcasting<sup>129</sup> but as Cristina Murrone and Nick Irvine point out, ‘No single idea can win’.<sup>130</sup> As reflected on by the BBC workers interviewed for this study, it is perhaps most closely defined when it is not achieved. Collections of staff anecdotes can incorporate such moments in an amusing way. For reasons that, forty years on, are not entirely clear, such ‘lowlights’ in BBC Leeds TV folklore came to be associated with one *Look North* story, here remembered by cameraman David Brierley:

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<sup>124</sup> Stuart MacDonald, ‘The Cost of Control: Speculation on the Impact of Management consultants on Creativity in the BBC’, *Prometheus*, 22:1 (2004),31, accessed 3 May 2013, <http://www.stuartmacdonald.org.uk/>

<sup>125</sup> Ibid, 32. MacDonald has taken the quote from Tom Burns, *Description, Explanation and Understanding* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995), 19

<sup>126</sup> Fell, interview.

<sup>127</sup> Stamper, interview.

<sup>128</sup> Geoghegan, interview.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>130</sup> Cristina Murrone and Nick Irvine, ‘The best television in the world’ in Murrone and Irvine (eds.) *Quality in Broadcasting*, (London: Institute for Public Policy Research, 1997), 12.

I think it was Jim Hogg<sup>131</sup> who went out to do the story about a man that made models out of matchsticks, and he sort of made castles and boats and all sorts of things. This duly went on *Look North* and, to put it mildly, was not well received by Bill Greaves who actually thought it was ‘a travesty of television’. He didn’t want ‘ever to see anything remotely approaching matchsticks on the bloody programme again’. This became a standard. Any story that vaguely fell into the matchsticks category was out...<sup>132</sup>

In practice BBC regional standards always had to be measured against how things were done for the network, just as in the 1940s James Gregson had set out to produce radio drama in the Leeds studio which, though of interest to the regional audience, would match metropolitan standards.<sup>133</sup> As in other organizations, changes in BBC strategy required staff to think differently about the nature of the organization and their place within it. It was certainly the case, as Jean Seaton observes, that by the end of the 1980s across the Corporation ‘the people who made the programmes were far less important than the people who did the accounting for programmes’<sup>134</sup> but when BBC Leeds TV production staff were told in 1989 that future feature output would be confined to news and current affairs not only did many of their current projects have to be aborted but this could also have been seen as a rejection of their past achievements.<sup>135</sup>

## Conclusion

The questions posed by BBC producer Philip Donnellan in his 1988 memoir have been used here as a starting point to explore the world of the workplace inhabited by BBC Leeds staff through the meanings they themselves gave to their work. The reflections included here may indeed be biased – these are individual stories which talk about life at the BBC, not only as it was experienced but as it was perceived and is now remembered. Those who have participated in this study have, while still being critical and despite any personal disappointments, generally valued their association with the BBC. Commenting on ‘the sameness of employees in

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<sup>131</sup> Reporter James Hogg was a member of *Look North*’s first presentation team.

<sup>132</sup> *Talented, Difficult, Lovely People*, 25.

<sup>133</sup> See above, chapter one, 14.

<sup>134</sup> Curran and Seaton, *Power Without Responsibility*, 2010, 212

<sup>135</sup> See chapter two.

broadcasting now,’ regional manager Bill Greaves adds: ‘Of course, it’s an old man looking back. He’s bound to think “things were better in my day”,’ but when approached by the oral historian, interviewees are likely to emphasize the differences between then and now.

However, these personal accounts also describe the production processes involved in broadcasting at a certain time, many of which have already disappeared, and the constraints under which staff worked. In this ‘version’ of the BBC, to return to Rob Perks’ phrase, public service and professionalism appear to have co-existed. It is certainly possible to argue that, in terms of the changes Tom Burns observed within the BBC between 1963 and 1973, the contributors to this study still worked *in* rather than *for* the BBC<sup>136</sup> but almost everything, even the occasional show of independence, was determined – quality, craft, process – in relation to the BBC as a national organization. The journalists who initially managed the Leeds regional television and local radio stations had come from senior posts at the BBC in Current Affairs in London and some of the staff, who started their BBC careers in Leeds, would move on to the BBC in London and to other posts in broadcasting. Change, when it came in 1989, came from the centre but overseeing it was new regional head Mark Byford who had joined the BBC ten years earlier, working in the Leeds TV newsroom as a Holiday Relief Assistant.<sup>137</sup> The BBC workers who have contributed to this study talk about the creative freedom they experienced before the Birtian revolution but, in posing Philip Donnellan’s final question, ‘with what results?’, the final chapter will focus on how the BBC in Yorkshire engaged with its audiences.

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<sup>136</sup> Curran and Seaton, *Power Without Responsibility*, 2010, 155

<sup>137</sup> Mark Byford became Head of Centre in Leeds in 1989 in charge of all regional television and local radio operations in Yorkshire and Humberside. In the following year he was appointed Assistant Controller, Regional Broadcasting (News and Current Affairs) with responsibility for regional journalism.



**Figure 24:** Editing 16mm film at the BBC in Leeds, 1980s



**Figure 25:** The 'Uher' portable reel-to-reel tape recorder, used widely for collecting sound in the field for both radio and TV, 1960s - 1990s.

## Chapter Seven: Engaging with Yorkshire audiences

They had no other test of the viewers. Jim Graham, the News Editor at the time, used to pass comments to the effect that, 'I guess the guy down in Barnsley eating his egg and chips would have liked that' – which was some sort of bench mark on whether or not an item was satisfactory or otherwise.

It always intrigued me, this fictitious character somewhere in Barnsley, watching *Look North*, eating egg and chips.<sup>1</sup>

While such a rule-of-thumb benchmark may have existed in the BBC Leeds TV newsroom in the early 1970s, as far as the present study is concerned, the audience has been something of an elephant in the room. While there is a general assumption amongst BBC staff that they are working on behalf of licence-fee payers, those interviewed made little reference to the audience unless prompted by the author. Before proceeding to the study's concluding remarks it is necessary therefore to first consider how the audience was perceived by BBC staff in Yorkshire from 1945 to 1990, and how they attempted to engage with and even involve potential viewers and listeners.

Regional Television Manager Bill Greaves says he had no specific idea about the viewers although sometimes he would form an opinion when he received letters of complaint and on one occasion he remembers going around to a complainant's house and finding himself receiving an apology.<sup>2</sup> His comments suggest that the station's location brought its staff into closer proximity with the regional audience. In 1970 he told the *Radio Times*:

The one thing we are anxious to establish above all else is that BBC North programmes are produced for the people of this region by people who live in this region. We know we're close to the audience because the morning after we produced a fairly critical item on Yorkshire County Cricket a viewer walked into our studio just as I was passing through. He stopped me and said: 'I just thought I'd tell you, lad, you know nowt about cricket'.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Cameraman Dave Brierley, *The Men and their Movie Cameras* [DVD].

<sup>2</sup> Greaves, interview.

<sup>3</sup> 'Broadcasting in Your Region', *Radio Times* 29 August 1970, 5.



He remembers discovering that some people did not appreciate the region's attempts to speak with a 'regional voice' because 'they didn't think they sounded like that and they used to write in, and phone in, that we were sending up the local people'.<sup>4</sup> But reporter and presenter Judith Stamper doubts whether the BBC did represent a regional audience, a feeling that she believes was shared by people in the region:

It was a lot less local and regional, I think, than people suspect. Even when you were going round the region the local folks would come out and say, 'Oh, the BBC', and they would think you had come from London whereas they identified with Yorkshire Television, partly because of the name. Yorkshire Television was Yorkshire, but the BBC was London-centric and you had come up from London. One woman even thought that we were presenting at night from a London studio. I think the BBC gave that impression. They always gave that impression, and I think it's still there, that they are the BBC and they are doing you a very big favour and it's not the other way round.<sup>5</sup>

This view was echoed by Controller of Regional Broadcasting, Mark Byford, in 1993 when he commented that 'the BBC is seen as remote and the BBC's own in-house research on trends in public opinion backs up these findings. There's clearly room for improvement'.<sup>6</sup>

Nevertheless, proximity to the audience – and not just for complaints – could be an advantage for regional stations. Jim Graham believes that regional viewers might be motivated by the 'attraction of expectation' - that there was a greater chance of spotting a member of their community than there would be on a network programme.<sup>7</sup> In addition to reporting on people's activities within programmes, series such as the astrology strand *Lifelines* took place in front of a studio audience while the series *Let the People Talk* (1975-1980) featured people from supposedly different backgrounds discussing topical themes.<sup>8</sup> Reference has already been made to *Top Town* (1976), presented by Dave Lee Travis, where teams from places across the region competed with each other in *It's A Knockout* style. While members of the Regional Advisory

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<sup>4</sup> *The Men and their Movie Cameras* [DVD]

<sup>5</sup> Stamper, interview.

<sup>6</sup> Harvey and Robins (eds.), *The Regions, the Nation and the BBC*, 107.

<sup>7</sup> Graham, interview.

<sup>8</sup> See Appendix Three for the range of BBC TV North's feature programmes

Council expressed some concern regarding the age of some of the children appearing on the show and also felt that rather too much of the organizing had been left to the Junior Chambers of Commerce, there was general agreement that children had liked the series. One member was reported as saying: 'It was a great thrill for children to appear on TV, particularly as most found ITV more exciting to watch than BBC which would die if it went for the staid audience. Top Town put the region on the map in the way it hadn't been before'.<sup>9</sup> There were two series of OBs featuring young musicians in the 1970s,<sup>10</sup> and programmes reflecting the innovative approach to dance then taking place in some Leeds schools also brought children into the TV studio.

The chance that young viewers might see their weather picture being broadcast on *Look North* may have also contributed to any feeling of 'expectation' while an occasional feature on the programme between 1980 and 1983, 'Dear Look North', although far from being a regional *Points of View*, was based on 'viewers' reactions'. Stories revisited included the rescue of squirrels in Halifax, the cast of the comedy series *Last of the Summer Wine* filming on location in Yorkshire, several dialect related items and a short sequence depicting reporter Mike Smartt's working day.<sup>11</sup> Occasionally, as programme director Mike Robertson recalls, viewers would respond to seemingly insignificant stories, as happened with an item about an award-winning model dinosaur factory:

When the item was transmitted, there were quite a few phone calls from viewers so it was decided to run a competition for the best painting of a dinosaur. They didn't realise what they had done until thousands of models and paintings arrived and they would have to divide it into seven or eight different classes.<sup>12</sup>

He was asked to produce an eighteen-minute award ceremony for *Look North* and the prizes included a visit to Television Centre, suggesting that while this might have been a Yorkshire programme, it was expected that viewers were likely to identify with the wider organization.

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<sup>9</sup> Regional Television Manager's Report, North Advisory Council Minutes, WAC R78/66/1

<sup>10</sup> *The BBC North Youth Concert*, 1977; *Young Music Makers*, 1978.

<sup>11</sup> BBC Leeds database, YFA.

<sup>12</sup> Robertson, interview.

In 1978 when the regional production team decided the phone-in was an effective way to put viewers in touch with their MPs, it was already a well-established format in local radio, and had also been used successfully on network radio for *Election Call* during the February 1974 general election.<sup>13</sup> At first the studio phone-in was used to give viewers the opportunity to talk to the region's MPs, but after a couple of series on a variety of themes the same format was used for a gardening series and the response was such that, between 1982 and 1990, sixty-two episodes of *Gardeners' Direct Line* were made for the region, and forty-five for daytime transmission on BBC 1.<sup>14</sup> Sue Pagdin, who worked on the telephones during the gardening programmes, says that she was very aware that she was answering calls from members of the audience, and there was a sense that they wanted to put their question to 'our' Geoffrey Smith, or one of the other panel members, all of whom lived in the region.<sup>15</sup>

But while studio phone-ins were a useful way of providing inexpensive programmes, it may be that the BBC Leeds production team did not immediately welcome the charity appeal, *Children in Need* when it was relaunched as a 'telethon' in 1980.<sup>16</sup> This annual appeal first appeared as a short broadcast on the Home Service in 1930 and a ten-minute TV appeal eventually followed but, according to *Children in Need* presenter Terry Wogan, BBC producers were irritated by the disruption to the Friday night schedules and he claims there was little support from both regional television and local radio.<sup>17</sup> Eve Colpus has looked at how, by constructing a relationship between 'giver and receiver', the BBC's weekly *Good Cause Appeal* in the inter-war period contributed to 'listener identification', establishing 'connections between

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<sup>13</sup> Briggs, *Competition*, 985.

<sup>14</sup> The radio programme *Gardeners' Question Time* continued to be produced in Leeds until the death of its producer and chairman Ken Ford in 1985.

<sup>15</sup> Pagdin, interview.

<sup>16</sup> The first UK 'telethon' was broadcast by Thames for ITV in October 1980: Peter Fiddick, 'BBC plans phone-in to support charity', 6 November 1980, 3.

<sup>17</sup> Terry Wogan, *Is it me?: An Autobiography*, (London: BBC, 2000) 287-289

those who produced and those that consumed media'.<sup>18</sup> And in subsequent years *Children in Need* was able to provide *Look North* with stories on how the money raised in the previous year within the region had been spent: for example, in 1981 reporter Ken Cooper visited Holly Bank Special School in Huddersfield to see how they spent the £500 they had received from *Children in Need*,<sup>19</sup> and coal miners were shown burying commemorative tankards underground as an example of a money-raising activity towards the appeal.<sup>20</sup> Sue Pagdin remembers working on *Children in Need* in the 1980s:

It's very different from now. In the 1980s we were involved very much with the local community and invited them to come down to the studio. It was chaos but it was fun, and everyone felt that they were included. Of course, everybody wanted to get on the television and I used to set up the Portakabins to house the volunteers from the banks... We used to have queues and queues of people bringing their money.<sup>21</sup>

If, as Hetherington found in his 1988 study of the UK's regional media, there was little difference between the content of *Look North* and YTV's *Calendar*,<sup>22</sup> then viewers wishing to choose between the programmes may have based their decision on programme style or channel allegiance (which might have been the same thing), or choice of presenter. As already stated regional TV manager Bill Greaves had wanted to avoid the use of an anchor, preferring instead to use his team of reporters to present the news magazine but in 1984 the decision was taken to use a two-handed presentation team on a regular basis. For West Yorkshire poet Simon Armitage, exploring the idea of the North in 1998, the regional TV magazine presenter also helped to provide a guide to 'Where You're At' in terms of regional identity:

Bulletins arrive in various forms, telling you what you're like, who you are. In the morning it's the *Yorkshire Post*, in the evening it's the *Huddersfield Examiner*. At teatime, it's *Look North* with Mike McCarthy and the beautiful Sophie Raworth, or on 'the other side' it's *Calendar*, once the hot-seat of Richard Whiteley, the I Claudius of broadcasting.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Eve Colpus, 'The Week's Good Cause: Mass Culture and Cultures of Philanthropy at the Inter-war BBC', *Twentieth Century British History*, 23 (2011) 3, 311

<sup>19</sup> *Look North* 3525, 20 November 1981, BBC database, YFA

<sup>20</sup> *Children in Need*, BBC North, 20 November 1981, BBC database, YFA

<sup>21</sup> Pagdin, interview.

<sup>22</sup> Hetherington, *News in the Regions*, 19.

<sup>23</sup> Simon Armitage, *All Points North*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1988), 2.

But the regional continuity announcers also contributed to the sociability – to use Scannell’s term – of the station’s output. Announcing the first edition of *Look North* in 1968, Brian Baines was the first voice to be heard from the BBC Leeds TV studio, and for more than twenty years he presented news and weather bulletins, and his was also the last voice BBC1 viewers would hear on weekday nights reading the close-down news headlines. When he died, his former colleague Mike Smartt described him as ‘the face and voice of Look North’,<sup>24</sup> and the *Yorkshire Post*’s obituarist observed that his nightly farewell – ‘From the two of us here, to the three of you out there, goodnight’ – reflected Baines’ belief that he was talking to individual viewers.<sup>25</sup>

Sport, with its running stories and events, had long been an important part of the BBC’s offering. The use *Look North* made of Eddie Waring, the face of rugby league - a sport which the Yorkshire region could truly call its own<sup>26</sup> - and the appointment of Harry Gratton, Radio Leeds’ Sports Editor, as one of its main presenters suggests that there was a desire to show that sport was a significant part of the programme. And, while sports historians have pointed out that football is more likely to reinforce local identities rather than contribute to regional identity,<sup>27</sup> sport is a major source for news. But although identity is a major theme in sports history, there has been little or no mention within the academy of the sports coverage provided by local radio. Nigel Fell, who was at Radio Leeds almost from its start in 1968, observes that the station staff were looking for things that would unite people in its editorial area which at that point was confined to Leeds but ‘you had news, you had sport which was of general and wide interest. We did a lot of sport in the early days’.<sup>28</sup> There was a convenient assumption that viewers would feel some allegiance to Yorkshire County Cricket Club and for most of this period the county team

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<sup>24</sup> BBC News, ‘Former Look North presenter dies’, 30 June 2006, accessed 5 January 2014, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/west\\_yorkshire/5132212.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/west_yorkshire/5132212.stm)

<sup>25</sup> ‘Brian Baines, Regional TV presenter’, *Yorkshire Post*, 8 July 2006, accessed 5 January 2014, <http://www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/news/community/obituaries/brian-baines-1-2377073>

<sup>26</sup> The breakaway from the Rugby Union which resulted in the foundation of rugby league football took place in Huddersfield in 1895.

<sup>27</sup> See, for example, Tony Mason, ‘Football, sport and the North’, in Jeff Hill and Jack Williams, *Sport and Identity in the North of England* (Keele: Keele University Press, 1991), 53.

<sup>28</sup> Fell, interview.

did play 'first class' cricket matches in Scarborough, Bradford, Middlesbrough, Harrogate, Hull, Sheffield (to 1973) and Huddersfield (to 1982) as well as at their home ground in Leeds.

As a child, sports writer and Leeds United fan Anthony Clavane listened to Radio Leeds' football commentaries:

1969. I'm lying on my bed, communing with BBC Radio Leeds, on tenterhooks as I listen to Doug Lupton's bulletins from Anfield. Every time the presenter, John Helm says, 'And now over to Doug Lupton at Anfield' I die a thousand deaths.<sup>29</sup>

Looking back, John Helm, Radio Leeds' Sports Editor from 1970 to 1975, says that the need to cover the district's main sports and teams meant that, with the exception of county cricket, there was no need to identify with one particular team or club.<sup>30</sup> In 1970 he reported to the station's Advisory Council that 'matches are covered in Leeds, Huddersfield, Bradford, Wakefield and Halifax. People come into the studios representing all different kinds of sport and participate in the programmes'. However, he went on to add that the good response the station got from listeners was 'probably due to the fact that Leeds United is the number one team in football and has created a great deal of support in a wide area'.<sup>31</sup>

That this might have been a problem for Radio Leeds in a more general sense is suggested by a 1987 report by BBC Broadcasting Research, following a 1985 survey, which suggested that there was less awareness of the station in Huddersfield and Halifax and that the respondents on the western side of West Yorkshire, as well as in Dewsbury, did not visit Leeds on a regular basis: 'These towns, especially Huddersfield and Halifax, have long histories and traditions. They are old mill towns and have clung to their roots and independence. There is no evidence of close affinity and involvement with Leeds.'<sup>32</sup> The report's authors commented that more coverage of these towns in news bulletins and programmes 'would make them feel more part of

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<sup>29</sup> Anthony Clavane, *Promised Land: A Northern Love Story*, (London: Yellow Jersey Press, 2011), 81.

<sup>30</sup> Helm, interview

<sup>31</sup> Radio Leeds: Local Radio Advisory Council, Meetings, Minutes 9 November 1970, WAC R81/10/1.

<sup>32</sup> BBC Broadcasting Research Special Projects Report, Radio Leeds: Local Radio in West Yorkshire. December 1987, WAC R9/405/1, 19.

Radio Leeds “the voice of West Yorkshire”<sup>33</sup> While the report suggested that there should be a separate five-minute bulletin for the western part of Radio Leeds’ editorial area, it made no reference to the frequency with which these opt-out bulletins should be transmitted. But, as Peter Lewis and Jerry Booth comment, at the time when BBC local radio was being established:

In national radio terms one of the most significant divisions was to be by age, not geography. Whilst radio was being fixed into a local mould, at least part of its audience, and an important part, was already defining itself in terms which had little to do with locality and more to do with common interests.<sup>34</sup>

However, Matthew Linfoot cites a survey of Radio Leeds listeners in 1987 which suggested that while the station’s audience was more likely to be ‘older rather than younger...there were occasional listeners from the younger demographic who tuned in for specific programmes, such as sports coverage.’<sup>35</sup>

As Chapter Two has shown, when regional broadcasting was resumed in 1945, the BBC North Region radio staff based in Leeds did provide opportunities for listeners – and writers – to broadcast. However, following *Broadcasting in the Seventies* when the mantle of regional broadcasting passed to television, not only were there fewer opportunities for this - the number of hours available for regional opting-out was very limited and television production methods were much more complex than those in radio - but there may also have been some uncertainty in Leeds about how ‘ordinary people’ should be heard on television. This is suggested by a comment made by producer and presenter David Seymour who told the *Radio Times*: ‘One of the first things you learn about reporting and interviewing for TV is that it is very difficult to get ordinary people to talk naturally in front of a camera.’ One solution, he believed, was to record ‘a typical pub argument’ – he cited a discussion between rival football fans in Sheffield where the

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid, 22.

<sup>34</sup> Lewis and Booth, *The Invisible Medium*, 93.

<sup>35</sup> Local Radio, Radio Leeds October 1979 Listening Report WAC R9/906, quoted in Linfoot, *A History of BBC Local Radio in England*, 292.

participants soon became 'quite oblivious to the camera'.<sup>36</sup> There may be a hint here of the outsider's gaze, but at the same time BBC local radio stations were attempting to break down the division between audience and broadcaster, and probably nowhere more so than in Leeds in ways that were reminiscent of the BBC's local relay stations in the 1920s which, as described by Scannell, were 'open to their publics' who they encouraged to drop in: 'The early stations worked as what we might now call community services: that is they interacted with and became part of their local culture.'<sup>37</sup>



**Figure 26:** Radio Leeds, 1968 – the search was on for a talking budge to act as the new station's mascot (left) but that the provision of local news was to be the station's priority is suggested by its busy newsroom (right).

As part of its argument for the establishment of local radio, in 1966 the Corporation published *BBC Local Radio in the Public Interest* which stressed the importance of community participation; it was envisaged that teams from universities, churches and other organizations could bring the programmes to their local radio stations as packages although the BBC would retain editorial control of the material that was offered as well as providing training.<sup>38</sup> That this happened at Radio Leeds can be seen in strands such as the seemingly proselytizing *Eleven Minus*, produced by members of the Leeds Evangelical Council for children who did not go to

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<sup>36</sup> Seymour was promoting *Twenty to the Dozen*, the second opt-out feature series to be made by BBC Leeds and transmitted in May 1971, *Radio Times* 29 April 1971.

<sup>37</sup> Paddy Scannell, 'The Origins of BBC Regional Policy' in Sylvia Harvey and Kevin Robins (eds.), *The Regions, the Nations and the BBC* (London: BFI, 1993), 27.

<sup>38</sup> Lewis and Booth, *The Invisible Medium*, 94-95.



Sunday school.<sup>39</sup> But station manager Phil Sidey was determined to take this further. Writing in the *New Statesman* in April 1969 he declared:

We claim to be a 'walk-in and talk' station and it surprises many callers to find that it is not an empty advertising slogan. We like involvement. We ran 'participation broadcasting' before it became a political cliché.

At Radio Leeds we have tried to create a friendly station that does not in the least mind making fun of itself as well as gently debunking the pompous around it. It is a genuine image. We are a cheerful crew and we do not think it is part of our business to build ourselves up as a new establishment to replace any that happen to be crumbling nearby. We are a People's Radio in the true sense of the word – at the disposal of everyone without formality.<sup>40</sup>

Sidey was an expert in devising events that would attract publicity but it is not the intention here to explore his differences with the BBC's Board of Management or, on occasion, with his fellow station managers which have been documented by Matthew Linfoot,<sup>41</sup> but to look more closely at how Radio Leeds interacted with its audience. Station assistant Nigel Fell confirms that the 'walk-in and talk' policy was indeed a reality and this gave participants a feeling of ownership; he remembers one blind couple who came every day, just to be there.<sup>42</sup> John Helm remembers 'that persuading the local community to come in and get involved, not just in terms of being interviewed, but in actually doing the broadcast themselves which was absolutely fascinating'<sup>43</sup> but Nigel Fell points out, 'It was always under our control, although very loose control.'<sup>44</sup> Inviting people to bring their own records along to play on air helped to compensate for the small size of the station's music library but could not be relied on in bad weather, and in the power blackouts during the 1972 and 1974 miners' strikes listeners were encouraged to call in to sing down the telephone. And in the more conventional phone-in programmes that took place during these strikes, Fell says that it was often possible to guess the caller's point of view from their telephone number. But the station's priority was always news, and local radio did have the

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<sup>39</sup> *Radio Times*, w/b 7 August 1971.

<sup>40</sup> Phil Sidey, 'Your Radio or Theirs', reprinted from the *New Statesman*, 11 April 1969 in Sidey, *Hello Mrs Butterfield*, 101.

<sup>41</sup> See, for example, Linfoot, *A History of BBC Local Radio in England*, 93-99.

<sup>42</sup> Fell, interview.

<sup>43</sup> Helm, interview.

<sup>44</sup> Fell, interview.

advantage of being able to give more coverage to stories; according to Nigel Fell people tuned in to Radio Leeds for the first time to hear about the rescue attempt at Lofthouse colliery in 1973.<sup>45</sup>

In an interview for a programme commemorating Radio Leeds' fifteenth anniversary in 1983, Phil Sidey, having first stressed that his priority for the station was 'strong Leeds-based journalism', went on to say, 'I also wanted to have it biased quite frankly and openly to what in those days we used to call the working class, and that's because, on the whole, the BBC seemed to be biased towards the middle class in its attitudes and there are rather more working class than middle class'.<sup>46</sup> Nigel Fell believes that, apart from Sidey's emphasis on the working class, at the time and like their BBC TV counterparts, Radio Leeds staff had little conception of who their audience might be. One *Radio Times* listing referred to 'the local folk who never dreamed they would ever be on the air'<sup>47</sup> and the variety of people and subjects featured by the station in its first few years is apparent in its listings: a programme made by Leeds University Union Society for Social Responsibility in Science<sup>48</sup> could sit alongside *Hoofbeats*, a series featuring 'the goings-on in a world where the horse rates equal – if not a little higher – than the man or woman who rides or drives him'.<sup>49</sup> The strand was produced by horse-owner Brian Lunn from Pontefract. Many programmes made use of 'local reviewers', something which still happens on BBC local radio today; a regular reviewer on Radio Leeds, then teaching at Leeds Polytechnic, was Harry Patterson, now better known by his pen name of Jack Higgins.<sup>50</sup>

In 1971 Ray Beaty took over from Sidey as station manager. Nigel Fell believes that Beaty also supported the idea of community radio but that programmes began to become more formalized.<sup>51</sup> Addressing the station's Advisory Council in 1971, 'Mr Beaty said he would like the community to decide what goes out on Radio Leeds and say what they want that is of interest

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> *Radio Leeds*: 'A bloody waste of time', BBC Radio Leeds, 24 June 1983.

<sup>47</sup> *Radio Times*, w/b 24 July 1971.

<sup>48</sup> *Radio Times*, w/b 10 July 1971.

<sup>49</sup> *Radio Times*, w/b 29 May 1971.

<sup>50</sup> See, for example, *Radio Times*, w/b 6 November 1971.

<sup>51</sup> Fell, interview.

to the community.<sup>52</sup> However, the community groups that Beaty suggested comprised architects, community relation groups and scientists.<sup>53</sup>

Nor were teenagers forgotten; a teenage magazine *Scope* launched in April 1971 aimed to provide 'a platform for the teenagers of Leeds to answer some of the allegations made by adults'<sup>54</sup> but Sidey had already handed over a week's programming to Leeds teenagers within a year of the station's launch. In advance of the radio experiment that took place in March 1969, Sidey told the *Guardian* that they were looking for 13 to 16-year-olds from comprehensive and secondary schools, rather than 'mawkish and semi-adult 17-year-olds, and precocious 16-year-olds from grammar schools'. 'Professional guidance' would be provided by the station's staff, but, Sidey added, 'If, in the end, the station producer was over-ruled by the teenage producer, I would be inclined to let the teenagers go ahead'.<sup>55</sup> Sidey ensured that the event was well publicised and part of Teenage Week was filmed by *24 Hours*. Reporting to the Advisory Council on 11 March 1969, he claimed that up to 20,000 young people had been involved to some extent in the Radio Leeds Teenage Week with more than 500 children putting forward ideas in the studio 'where no censorship had had to be used'. A meeting of the 'Teenage Council' in the city's council chamber had passed a resolution to support Radio Leeds, one argument being 'the absence of an impartial local outlet for news'. In addition, 'Approved-School boys', armed with portable tape recorders, went out to ask passers-by if they would employ 'Approved-School boys'.<sup>56</sup>

Phil Sidey provided a much fuller account in the journal *New Society* where much was made of the mock municipal elections and party political broadcasts which had resulted in a considerable amount of related activity in the city's schools in advance of Teenage Week. The Young Communist League asked: 'What has black underwear to do with education?'<sup>57</sup> While

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<sup>52</sup> Radio Leeds: Local Radio Advisory Council, Meetings, Minutes 6 November 1971, R81/10/1.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> *Radio Times*, w/b 10 April 1971.

<sup>55</sup> Michael Parkin, 'Teenagers take over radio', *Guardian*, 22 January 1969.

<sup>56</sup> Radio Leeds: Local Radio Advisory Council, Meetings, Minutes 11 March 1969, R81/10/1.

<sup>57</sup> Phil Sidey, 'Radio Teen', *New Society* 20 March 1969, 433.

undoubtedly Radio Leeds was providing a way to educate the city's youth in citizenship and democracy, music was not ignored. Sidey observed that 'some of my colleagues had to bite their lips from time to time when given instructions in imperious tones, by kids the age of their own children, to fade the microphone up and down for some ambitious piece of imitation Radio One.'<sup>58</sup> But Sidey also used the article to make more general points about local radio. While he does not miss the opportunity to criticize the case for commercial radio, commenting: 'It is worth considering whether such an experiment launched under that multifarious umbrella - known in some circles as the monolithic BBC - could ever have been carried out by a commercial radio station,'<sup>59</sup> and he goes on to talk about the potential of BBC Local Radio:

But once the radio industry and its customers switch completely to VHF – or we all find the Medium Wave that some people believe has been in the National Gallery vaults all these years – then Teenage Week or any other mass community involvement can become commonplace. Such involvement could be for mental satisfaction or even physical – organising volunteer effort to build a sports centre in good times or producing an army of helpers within minutes in case of disaster striking the community.<sup>60</sup>

Teenage Week was never repeated, and as BBC Local Radio became more established and the limitations of its resources became more apparent, community involvement was more likely to take the form of a partnership with a local organization. At Radio Humberside in 1976 the planning and production of a series of programmes, *Is it cancer, doctor?*, involved staff from the Humberside Area Health Authority. The series was designed to inform and educate listeners about cancer, its symptoms and treatments, but the BBC was also anxious to assess the effectiveness of the series. A survey of listeners found that around 18% of Humberside's population had heard one or more of the programmes but only 2% had listened to the whole series and concluded that these findings were 'not unusual'. The series was followed up with a questionnaire sent to GPs within the Radio Humberside 'editorial area'; one in ten of the doctors who responded said that patients had mentioned hearing the series but were 'divided' as to

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 434.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

whether they were worried or reassured by the programmes.<sup>61</sup> And by the mid-1980s, except for those people who had been specifically invited to appear on programmes, occasional open days had taken the place of casual dropping-in. A leaflet produced for Radio Leeds for its 1985 open day even had a page for autographs; participation had been replaced by the hope that listeners would identify with the station's presenters.<sup>62</sup>

Noting that Richard Hoggart - a member of the Pilkington Committee who had also supported the BBC's case for local radio - had argued that community radio could mean a 'reversion to parochialism',<sup>63</sup> Michael Bailey, Ben Clarke and John K. Walton suggest that Hoggart's 'subtext' is 'that locally orientated media may result in the fragmenting of society into a mass of atomized communities of interest or regional identity, which could put an end to any sense of shared culture and sociability' and that local broadcasting can only be entrusted to the national public broadcaster, the BBC.<sup>64</sup> However, Mary Dowson, director of Bradford Community Broadcasting (BCB), a not-for-profit community station broadcasting on FM and launched in 1994, claims that by aiming to bring the city's 'diverse communities together' the station helps people to feel part of 'one community':

We've tried to be an umbrella for Bradford... One of our great strengths is the diversity of programming and one of our great weaknesses is the diversity of programming. At BCB you never know what you are going to get so it's very hard for listeners to tune into BCB sometimes.<sup>65</sup>

But, reflecting on his own experience in regional television, Jim Graham says, 'I used to worry sometimes about the coziness of locality. It was rejectionist – unless you are one of us you are different... localism is exclusive and can therefore be seen as a negative force unless you bind it into, say, a charity run'. Citing the Great North Run as an example, he warns that care has to be

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<sup>61</sup> BBC, *Annual Review of BBC Audience Research Findings No 4, 1976-1977*, 62

<sup>62</sup> 'BBC Radio Leeds: The Voice of West Yorkshire', WYAS WYL2101/20.

<sup>63</sup> Richard Hoggart, *Only Connect* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1971), 89.

<sup>64</sup> Michael Bailey, Ben Clarke and John K. Walton, *Understanding Richard Hoggart: A Pedagogy of Hope* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 161.

<sup>65</sup> Mary Dowson, interview with author, Bradford, 8 April 2011.

taken not to drift into sectarianism: 'As a broadcaster I think you've got to read that, not go back into a culture that's now missing and gone.'<sup>66</sup>

This chapter has shown that regional programme makers profess to having had very little conception about who was actually watching and listening. While this might suggest that their relationship with their audience was one of otherness, it also resulted in the editorial approach outlined by regional TV manager Bill Greaves to the BBC North Region Advisory Council in 1972: 'The Tuesday opt-out aimed at reflecting the wide range of activities and interests in the North...Overall, he strove to avoid a "Regional Ghetto" which might follow consistent single-theme programming.'<sup>67</sup> And at the same time - although this was not to last - Radio Leeds was, to an extent, allowing members of the audience to produce their own programmes. But before moving on to this study's concluding discussion, it may be useful to provide a brief epilogue to some of the points raised in this chapter. While Chapter Four has shown that the Reithian mix offered to the regional audience was not always as wide as Bill Greaves suggests here, programmes on pot-holing and canals are still being discussed in online forums thirty years or more since they were last transmitted.<sup>68</sup> And, more recently, the assumption by BBC management that it was possible to have a very clear conception of the audience, and that local radio output could be targeted at two fully described but imagined characters, resulted in Project Bullseye whose fictional 'Dave and Sue' had to be quickly forgotten when the strategy was abandoned in 2010.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Graham, interview.

<sup>67</sup> Regional Television Manager's Report, North Advisory Council Minutes, July 1972, WAC R78/66/1

<sup>68</sup> See for example Granny Buttons, 'A Voyage Between Two Seas', accessed 9 January 2014, [http://www.grannybuttons.com/granny\\_buttons/2009/06/a-voyage-between-two-seas---still-going-strong-on-dvd.html](http://www.grannybuttons.com/granny_buttons/2009/06/a-voyage-between-two-seas---still-going-strong-on-dvd.html).

<sup>69</sup> See David Self, 'Meet Dave 'n' Sue', *New Statesman*, 28 February 2005, accessed 6 January 2013, <http://www.newstatesman.com/node/150072>; 'DQF: Martin Kelner on local radio's future', *Radio Today*, 12 October 2011, accessed 9 January 2013, <http://radiotoday.co.uk/2011/10/dqf-martin-kelner-on-local-radios-future/> Ridiculing by the press might have contributed to the BBC's abandonment of the strategy.

## CONCLUSION

Of course, it's an old man looking back. He's bound to think 'things were better in my day'.<sup>1</sup>

This dissertation began with a story – that of the wedding of Prince Charles to Lady Diana in 1981 as told by the BBC's regional news magazine *Look North*, broadcast on weekday nights from Leeds. However, while this individual story, quoted in the introduction to this dissertation, described some aspects of how this national event was being marked in Yorkshire, there was no reference to previous items *Look North* had carried which gave a different impression of the event: councillors in a Derbyshire town would be flying the Red Flag on the wedding day<sup>2</sup> and workers in Leeds had threatened to strike because they were being expected to work on what was supposed to be a public holiday.<sup>3</sup> But *Look North*'s coverage of the event is now chiefly remembered by those who worked on the programme because of the decision to move that edition outdoors, and provide a party on air for a group of 'disadvantaged children'. Before the programme had finished, it had begun to rain and the children were fighting amid the cake and jelly.<sup>4</sup>

The present study has set out to answer two key questions. Firstly, had it been possible for BBC staff working in Yorkshire between 1945 and 1990 to develop distinctive regional or local narratives within their programmes? To answer this, it was also necessary to explore the workplace culture which these BBC staff members had experienced, and to which they may also have contributed, seeking the 'meanings' their work had for them. This prompted the second key question – to what extent was it possible to determine if a distinctive regional culture had existed within the BBC in Yorkshire and how, and why, this may have changed within this time

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<sup>1</sup> Greaves, interview.

<sup>2</sup> *Look North: 3409*, 11 June 1981, BBC Leeds database, YFA

<sup>3</sup> *Look North: 3423*, 1 July 1981, BBC Leeds database, YFA

<sup>4</sup> The programme's presenter Mike Smartt in *Talented, Difficult, Cussed, Lovely People*, 1

frame. Using oral history and other forms of reminiscence as its starting point, but with the desire to go beyond the anecdote, this study set out to explore the internal world of one BBC English Region, Yorkshire, as it existed between 1945 and 1990, and which had not previously been the subject of academic consideration. But as this research has demonstrated, to understand the answers to these questions, it has also been necessary to go beyond memory and refer to a wide variety of sources including both programme and written archives.

Taking Yorkshire as its example, it is clear that the BBC was committed to the extension of regional and local broadcasting, but it was always pragmatic in its approach and its resources did not always meet its ambitions. Indeed, as the national (and international) broadcaster it was in the BBC's interest to have some sort of presence across the country, and both competition and the need to increase its newsgathering capabilities made this more necessary. However, the distinction between the regional and the local was not always clear and was subject to redefinition as was shown in the debate surrounding the introduction of *Broadcasting in the Seventies*, as discussed in chapter two. For this reason, it was important that regional and local broadcasting, radio and television, be considered together. This study also differs from previous accounts by focusing on the way these developments affected BBC staff in Yorkshire, and particularly in Leeds.

The lack of clarity about regional boundaries – dictated by transmitters but also by financial and political considerations – was a problem for the BBC but also presents problems for the historian. This study has focused on a region, Yorkshire, which – in name - as far as the BBC was concerned, did not exist. Before 1968 it was all just part of the North Region; when the 'area' television service from Leeds was launched in 1968 it was called BBC TV North, and when this became a regional television service in 1970, it was still called BBC TV North. In representing the region to the nation, the location of its bureaux was more important to the Corporation than any deliberate attempt to build regional identity. But, even before 1968, it has been shown that, despite its outposts in Newcastle and Leeds, parts of the North Region felt they



were not being fairly represented. And it is clear that when the new ‘television’ service was launched ‘east of the Pennines’, production staff tended to focus on Yorkshire. While it might be expected that most news stories would originate in those places where most people lived and worked, they had considerable editorial freedom when it came to making ‘weekly programmes of general interest’<sup>5</sup> yet as this study has argued and, as Appendix Three confirms, Yorkshire subjects predominated although other parts of the region were also featured. The extent to which it was possible to adequately report on every part of the region was a problem the BBC did not solve in this period although the subdivision of regions was seen as one possible solution, but it was not until 2002 that East Yorkshire and Lincolnshire got their own *Look North* programme, produced from Hull.<sup>6</sup>

As far as television was concerned, the evidence presented here suggests that the regional production team had an unformed idea of what Yorkshire actually was. As a name it was frequently used as a label for the whole of the region or, as with *Savile’s Yorkshire Travels*, to suggest to the majority of viewers that there was always the possibility that they might see places they knew, what former *Look North* News Editor Jim Graham referred to as the ‘attraction of expectation’.<sup>7</sup> But in practice, for Graham and his fellow journalists, the region was defined by its major industries and, in that sense, it was formed by its major news stories. And these were not just the industrial stories, which provided an ongoing chronicle of how the region was changing, but also the other big stories (Lofthouse, Flixborough, the Yorkshire Ripper) and the way they had been reported also contributed to the station’s collective memory. By looking for interesting stories that fell within the regional boundaries, from a film on mediaeval stained glass to the potted biographies included in the *Lifelines* series, viewers were offered a Reithian mix of programmes. However, a tendency to ensure that programmes would be successful by returning

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<sup>5</sup> See above, 85.

<sup>6</sup> In 1991 the BBC created a new East Midlands region based in Nottingham.

<sup>7</sup> See above, 240.

to the same subjects, thereby taking up airtime and resources that could be used to explore fresh topics, has also been noted. But, despite that, some chances were taken, for example it was never thought that programmes on contemporary dance would attract a large audience. And, while some of the regional documentaries may have been made with the prospect of an eventual network repeat in mind, it was clear from the beginning that many of these programmes would never be shown beyond the region.

A major theme of this study has been the relationship between the Corporation's metropolitan centre and its Yorkshire outposts, which - as has been suggested here - was in a constant and daily process of renegotiation. In the case of the North Region Radio Drama unit, this was more complex than is sometimes realised. While many of the frustrations and lack of resources experienced by the unit have been detailed here, the drama producers succeeded in working independently from both Manchester and London for over thirty years, supporting Thomas Hajkowski's view that, in some cases at least, the BBC regions continued to have more independence after 1939 than had previously been suggested.<sup>8</sup> But, while discovering and nurturing northern writers and thus playing a significant part in its cultural life of the region, the Leeds-based drama producers were anxious to avoid parochialism. James Gregson, who had started out as a writer of dialect plays, had declared that there was no excuse for 'broadcasting local piffle'.<sup>9</sup> The department's output had to be at least as good as that produced in London and, as has been shown, their Leeds base with its own dedicated studio gave them the freedom to experiment. If Alfred Bradley was aware of D-G Ian Trethowan's description of the Leeds drama unit as 'probably the single most exciting creative studio in BBC radio at that time',<sup>10</sup> he may sometimes have thought that had happened despite the BBC.

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<sup>8</sup> Hajkowski, *BBC and National Identity in Britain, 1922-1953*, 114.

<sup>9</sup> See above, 67.

<sup>10</sup> *Radio Leeds: 'A bloody waste of time'*, BBC Radio Leeds 24 June 1983.

Those BBC Leeds television staff contributing to this study talked about the considerable creative freedom they experienced during most of the period and also of bringing a professionalism to their work, but that professionalism tended to be defined as doing things the London way. When, at the end of the 1980s, the production of a number of programmes for first showing on the network suddenly came to an end and staff in the BBC's English Regions were told that TV opt-out programmes would in future be news-based, it seemed to production staff in Leeds that their skills and achievements had not been recognized. In the face of strategic corporate change, they were never going to be professional enough.<sup>11</sup> But as these personal accounts also indicate, there had been some contention within and between craft groups, and the adoption of new electronic technology was seen by some workers as being responsible for curtailing their opportunities for creativity.

The process of writing – and this study is no exception – leads to a tendency to talk about the BBC, 'the region' or even 'the BBC in London', and it is sometimes difficult to remember that these terms are being used to describe individuals with different motives and opportunities. The evidence presented here suggests that the BBC, in this region at least, drew its staff from a wider range of backgrounds than is often suggested. There may have been a BBC 'type' but this was most likely to be self-defined; as expressed – for example - by Jim Graham's comment that the BBC expected staff to have its values in their 'genes'.<sup>12</sup> In the period covered by this study the majority of television journalists working for the BBC in Leeds had started out working on local and provincial newspapers and it has been suggested that this contributed to what was described by more than one interviewee as a 'macho culture', emphasized by the station's position at the heart of what was seen as a 'hard news' region.

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<sup>11</sup> And yet the BBC training schemes for both news and production staff demanded that part of the traineeship be spent in a BBC region.

<sup>12</sup> See above, 127

Journalists in Leeds always assumed they were gathering the news not just for the region but also for the BBC. However, this occasionally brought them into conflict with BBC News, and dealing with *Nationwide* seemed to be a constant battle. These experiences suggested that, in contrast to the centre, the region was seen as essentially ‘inferior’ – it was not London. The BBC’s regional magazine from Leeds, *Look North*, did provide a regional narrative for its viewers although this in no way challenged the national narrative. Instead, it provided a regional interpretation of the national news. In addition, it included stories that would never feature on the national news, provided more detailed reports on sport, weather and local politics than would be possible on the national networks and, despite having little idea of who they were, occasionally engaged with the regional audience. Additionally, in the spaces between news and information were feature items which seem to have been made as much for *Look North*’s production team as for its viewers. Referring to the output of the BBC’s National Regions - but, also, by implication, its English Regions - before 1953, Hajkowski argues that even tourism programmes ‘reinforced for regional listeners that the mountains, rivers and lakes described in such programmes were *their* mountains, *their* rivers, *their* lakes.’<sup>13</sup> While the evidence presented here makes no claims for the effect such programmes may have had on members of the audience, this emphasis on sharing – landscape, history, and culture - would seem to apply to the approach taken by BBC Leeds TV production staff a few years later.

However, places and landscapes are not always shared, but can be subject to the outsider’s gaze and this theme has been explored using the city of Bradford, just nine miles from Leeds, as a case study in chapter five. The programmes discussed in detail here did not focus on economic hardship but on urban blight created by redevelopment, and nor were they made by the BBC in Leeds. Both *Lost City* made by the BBC in London, and *The Glory That Was Bradford* made for the region by the BBC in Manchester, justified their critique of the city - and as is suggested

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<sup>13</sup> Hajkowski, *BBC and National Identity in Britain, 1922-1953*, 117.

here, its people - in the name of art. And by 1974 when the BBC's Further Education team made a series about the failure of post-war planning, every programme focused on Bradford. While the BBC did not offer people in the city a platform to respond to these programmes, these views could be, and were, expressed through the local press. But in the late 1960s the BBC began to introduce a new service that it hoped would allow more voices across the country to be heard. Matthew Linfoot, concluding his history of BBC Local Radio, argues that despite the compromises that had to be made, 'local radio at the end of the 1970s was truthful to the original intentions of the founding fathers'<sup>14</sup> The experience of Bradford presented here suggests that the move away from city to county radio stations, and therefore from easily identifiable communities, illustrated not only by Radio Leeds but by the BBC's other local radio stations in Yorkshire, while it might have unavoidable, was a significant compromise. Although it was originally intended that the present study would consider every BBC local radio station in the Yorkshire region, the response to my initial call for interviewees as well as the desire to explore that 'precarious combination' of Leeds and Bradford identified by Briggs led me to focus on BBC Radio Leeds. The question asked by the BBC Leeds Advisory Council in 1972 - 'How local is local?' - has been a major theme of this study.

And perhaps BBC Local Radio never got more local than Radio Leeds in its first two years when manager Phil Sidey - out to prove that the BBC could not just do local but also community radio – loudly encouraged individuals and groups in the city, 'the local folk who never dreamed they would be on the air',<sup>15</sup> to come in and contribute to the output and activity of the station. The evidence presented here has shown that BBC staff had very little conception of who was watching and listening – they were 'local folk' or 'ordinary folk' and it is not clear to what extent such descriptions related to perceived social class. In the interviews conducted for this study, as well as the other memoirs consulted, class was simply not referred to.

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<sup>14</sup> Linfoot, *A History of BBC Local Radio in England*, 319.

<sup>15</sup> See above, 250.

In the course of this research a deliberate attempt was made to reflect a wide range of occupations within the BBC workplace, and it should be noted that not everyone interviewed for this study has been quoted here.<sup>16</sup> But at this point it is also important to reflect on some of the methodological challenges thrown up by this research. Oral history requires that the researcher enters into a relationship of good faith with the interviewee, especially when the starting point for the interview has been a sense of shared experience, but such evidence is bound to be partial. It has been necessary therefore to place this testimony, not only within its political and organizational context, but also alongside BBC programme material produced in Leeds, which for the most part, has not been the focus of previous academic study.<sup>17</sup> The first problem the academic researcher encounters in the use of BBC programmes as historical source material is that of access. And it is perhaps significant that for most of its history the BBC's archival policies did not extend to its regions. This researcher was fortunate in being able to use the *Look North* material held by the Yorkshire Film Archive but, as has been stated, due to the production process employed, the film holdings are far from complete. However, it was possible to use the catalogue to the BBC material held in the archive – as much a creation of BBC workers as the film itself – to take a broad view of the news material produced by the station. A similarly broad approach was taken with the station's television feature programmes as Appendix Three demonstrates. And, as is often the case with media history, programmes – especially those made for regional and local radio – had to be reconstructed from a variety of sources including the regional edition of the *Radio Times*. A pleasing discovery was the amount of material held by the

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<sup>16</sup> All interviewees have been listed in the Bibliography.

<sup>17</sup> The exceptions being the radio programme *Have A Go*, and an occasional acknowledgement of the work that Alfred Bradley was doing in Leeds but with little if any reference to individual productions. See also Christine Verguson, Review of *A Sense of Place: Regional British Television Drama 1956-1982*, by Lez Cooke, *Journal of Media Practice*, 14 (2013) 4, 353.

West Yorkshire Archives Service suggesting that, through its freelance contributors, the BBC reached further into the provinces than is often supposed.<sup>18</sup>

The memories presented here are - of necessity - selective, and mediated not only by the contributor but also the historian. Comparative investigations, not only between BBC regions but also between those regions and their commercial counterparts,<sup>19</sup> may contribute to the further understanding of many of the themes explored in this study. Such research, while not denying the significance of styles of leadership, would do well to reflect on the experiences of people working at different organizational levels. But it should be noted that many of those who contributed their memories to the present study left the Corporation at a time when their experiences and achievements were being denied within the organization.<sup>20</sup> It is hoped that the recording and representation of personal and regional voices, central to this study, will add to the wider historiography of the BBC. Looking back, these former BBC workers portray a lost world in which they experienced considerable freedom, often as not equated with creativity. But, despite frequent frustrations and even the occasional show of independence, almost every aspect of their work - craft, process and quality - was determined in relation to the BBC as a national organization.

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<sup>18</sup> Making use of these archives, the way these freelancers experienced the BBC may be worthy of future investigation.

<sup>19</sup> It is intended that, where permission has been given, the interviews recorded as part of this research should be deposited to in the University of Huddersfield archives. In addition, interviews with YTV staff, who worked for the company in its earliest days in Leeds, were carried out for an MA dissertation and website: Steve Burnip, *Memories of Yorkshire Television*, MA thesis, University of Huddersfield, 2012; 'Memories of YTV', accessed 26 January 2013, <http://memoriesofytv.weebly.com/index.html>

<sup>20</sup> Born, *Uncertain Vision*, 68; Curran and Seaton, *Power Without Responsibility*, 2010, 225. In 2004, the author, asked by a BBC manager to give a short speech, was nevertheless warned not to refer to the 'good old days'.

## Appendix One: A brief chronology

**1945** BBC regional broadcasting relaunched

**1946** BBC North Region Sound Drama unit set up in Leeds

**1951** Opening of Holme Moss transmitter brings television to the North of England

**1957** BBC's regional television news begins

**1967** ITA announces new contractor for the Yorkshire region

**1967** Radio Sheffield opens

**1968** Transmission of BBC's new weekday news magazine begins from Leeds for newly created BBC television 'area' for Yorkshire and Lincolnshire and is given the name BBC TV North as its ident.

**1968** Radio Leeds opens in Leeds city centre

**1968** Yorkshire Television goes on air from Leeds

**1969** *Nationwide* goes on air

**1970** Radio Teesside opens

**1970** BBC North becomes one of eight newly designated English Regions and retains the BBC North ident.

**1971** Radio Humberside opens

**1974** Commercial station Radio Hallamshire opens in Sheffield

**1975** North Region Radio Drama unit moves from Leeds to Manchester

**1978** Radio Leeds moves into studios previously occupied by the Radio Drama unit in Woodhouse Lane.

**1983** BBC launches Radio York to cover the county of North Yorkshire

**1986** BBC North East region is created with its administrative headquarters in Leeds and a second regional centre in Newcastle. Regional programmes made in Leeds for the region now use BBC North East Leeds as an ident., with both centres making programmes for both their traditional regions and the network. The BBC local radio stations in Sheffield, Leeds, Humberside, York, Newcastle and Cleveland are also incorporated into the new super-region.

**1990** BBC North, BBC North West and BBC North East merge into one BBC North region.



## Appendix Two: Looking back at *Look North*

### Summary of three items transmitted on *Look North* (Leeds) in March 1993 to mark the programme's twenty-fifth anniversary<sup>1</sup>

#### **TWENTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY: 1 – ‘The dramas and the disasters’**

Opening words and titles of first edition of *Look North* from Leeds, 25 March 1968; montage of reporters used in titles; reporter/presenter Barry Chambers in street wearing sandwich board advertising ‘Look North at Six’

‘Tragedy’: Dibble Bridge coach crash 1975; Lockington train crash 1986; Flamborough fishing disaster 1984; Flixborough explosion 1974; Lofthouse Colliery disaster, Wakefield 1973; Hickson & Welch explosion, Castleford 1992.

Strikes: Miners’ picketing during 1972 and 1974 strikes; 1984-5 strike - Scargill arrested, Orgreave, miners’ returning to work behind brass band; Leeds clothing workers’ strike 1970; steel workers’ strike 1980; industrial decline.

First Briton in space, Helen Sharman, 1989; woman who passed driving test at fortieth attempt; child prodigy Ruth Lawrence

Bradford City FC fire 1985; Hillsborough Disaster 1989; M62 coach bomb

‘Men who destroyed lives’: ‘Black Panther Donald Neilson, triple murderer Arthur Hutchinson, gunman Barry Prudom ‘but none worse than the Yorkshire Ripper’ – Chief Superintendent George Oldfield listening to hoax tape and Peter Sutcliffe under blanket into court.

‘Distinguished visitors’: The Pope in York, Concorde, the Queen on her silver jubilee tour and opening M62, unofficial ‘poet laureate’ Gilbert Hammond reading poem about the Queen, the Queen waving from the deck of Britannia at the end of her Silver Jubilee visit to the region.

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<sup>1</sup> The items were produced by former BBC Leeds Regional Journalist John Irwin and transmitted on 23, 24 and 26 March 1993. Source: BBC Leeds TV staff, *A Celebration of 25 Years of Television Broadcasting by the BBC in Leeds*, presentation cassette, VHS, 1993

## **TWENTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY: 2 – ‘The region’s sporting highlights’**

World Student Games, Sheffield opening ceremony, 1991; ‘Sporting heroes’: swimmer Adrian Moorhouse; athletes Peter Elliott and Tessa Sanderson, golfer Tony Jacklin; World snooker champion Joe Johnson; boxer Bomber Graham; clip of interview with cricketer Sir Len Hutton, Geoffrey Boycott’s 100th century and reference to divisions within the Yorkshire County Cricket Club committee; Leeds United: playing, managers Don Revie and Brian Clough, fans being chased by police 1975; Hull’s rugby league fans on way to Wembley for 1980 Challenge Cup Final.

Cod Wars 1970s – Iceland ‘gun boat’ arresting Hull trawler; Falklands War 1982: Hull ferry, Norland, sets off, posthumous VC; Gulf War: Tornados set off from RAF Leeming; Eviction of ‘private army’ from a Hull demolition site.

Electioneering: Harold Wilson in Huddersfield market, Margaret Thatcher serving fish and chips at Harry Ramsdens; Keith Joseph being heckled; George Brown in Sheffield; Dennis Healey playing bingo with supporters.

Eddie Waring presents 1970 Rugby League Challenge Cup draw in the *Look North* studio

## **TWENTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY: 3 – ‘The changing culture of the region, its artists and characters’**

Reporter John Burns ballroom-dancing in Hull; butcher Albert Hirst with his black pudding, ‘the caviar of the north’; artist Joe Scarborough on painting his community of Pitsmoor [Sheffield]; sculptor Henry Moore & clip of interview on the influence of the Yorkshire landscape; Barbara Hepworth’s ‘Family of Man’ being replaced at Yorkshire Sculpture Park after theft; dinosaur shapes seen in dried out reservoir; singing shepherd, Arthur Howard; Rolling Stones in concert at Roundhay Park, Leeds; organist asked why she has been sacked for her bad playing; West Yorkshire Playhouse, Leeds under construction; actor James Mason [from Huddersfield] talking on site of new Sheffield theatre; ‘Street theatre’ as pools winner Viv Nicholson returns to Castleford after transmission of BBC Play for Today [based on her autobiography]; Keighley artist Stanley Boardman’s paintings of street life; David Hockney demonstrating his new ‘video-photo’ technique at the National Museum of Photography in Bradford; shots of cloth, and exteriors of Asian-owned shops in Bradford; Meadowhall shopping centre, Sheffield; restoration of York Minster after 1984 fire.

‘Wonderful World’ montage: B&W shots of Batley first shown in 1968 when singer Louis Armstrong’s visit to the town was announced, colour shots of children on beach at Mablethorpe [Lincs.], shoppers in Leeds, Halifax Civic Theatre and children from town auditioning for Northern Ballet, Phoenix dance company, Quarry Hill flats in Leeds being demolished, Lancaster bomber flying, Hyde Park flats in Sheffield being demolished, Mallard [record breaking steam locomotive], People on beach, high diver.

## Appendix Three: Summary of BBC TV North Feature Programmes

1971-1990

YEAR	PROGRAMME / SERIES	MEDIUM	TYPE OF PROGRAMME	PERSONALITIES	PLACES
<b>1971</b>	<i>From April 1<sup>st</sup> 1971 – 36 programmes</i>				
	Savile's Yorkshire Travels (4 programmes: 1. My Yorkshire; 2. Individuals; 3. Do Your Own Thing; 4. Old Folks)	Studio + film inserts	Studio chat show with film inserts from around Yorkshire	Jimmy Savile. Guests include George Howard, Mackenzie Thorpe, Beryl Burton	
	Twenty to the Dozen (12 programmes)	Studio + film inserts	Studio chat show on specific topics	Presented by Look North reporter David Seymour	
	Tale of Four Cities (4 programmes)	Studio + film inserts	Studio discussion	Presented by BBC reporter John Burns	Lincoln, Leeds, Hull, Bradford
	Thinking Back : J.B. Priestley	Film	Profile. Literature	Priestley	Yorkshire
	Thinking Back: Phyllis Bentley	Film	Profile. Literature	Phyllis Bentley	Yorkshire
	Thinking Back: Jean Rook	Studio	Profile. Journalism	Jean Rook	Yorkshire
	Thinking Back: Ruby Miller	Studio	Profile, former Gaiety Girl from Brixton	Ruby Miller	
	To Market, To Market (2 programmes)	Studio	Discussion on the Common Market and regional connections	Presented by BBC Northern Industrial correspondent Harold Webb	
	Savile's Yorkshire Travels (4 programmes)	Studio + film inserts	Studio chat show		Yorkshire
	Geoff Boycott – Number One	Studio	Sport - cricket	David Seymour + Boycott, Brian Johnson, Ian Wooldridge	Yorkshire
	Advantage – Roger Taylor	Studio	Sport - tennis	Roger Taylor	Yorkshire
	Harvey Smith – Yorkshireman	Studio	Sport – show jumping	Harvey Smith	Yorkshire
	North Country Christmas	Studio + film inserts	Traditions. Yorkshire dialect.		
<b>1972</b>	<i>38 programmes + 1 repeat</i>				
	A Yorkshire Kind of Folk	Studio + film inserts	Music		
	Your Child: School Report 72 (5 programmes)	Studio	Discussion programme		
	Mackenzie Thorpe: Lincolnshire Poacher (2 programmes)	Film		Mackenzie Thorpe	Lincolnshire
	All Mod Cons (3 programmes)	Studio + film inserts	Discussion – architecture.	Presented by Prof Patrick Nuttgens. Guests include Alan Bennett and the Countess of Harewood.	
	Yes, It's the 'This is the BBC North from Leeds' Show	Studio + film inserts	Comedy		
	One Miner's Triumph	Studio	Interview	Jim Bullock OBE, President of colliery managers union & author interviewed by broadcaster Tony Van der Bergh	West Yorkshire
	Wise without Morecambe	Studio	Interview	Ernie Wise interviewed by broadcaster Peter Wheeler	
	Electric Picture Palace Proudly Presents (3 programmes)	Studio + film inserts	Archive	Presented by Brian Thompson with film archivist/collector John Huntley	Yorkshire
	Top Man's Sport	Film	Documentary on angling		
	What a Way to Spend a Sunday	Film	Documentary on caving	Filmed by Sid Perou – scripted and narrated by Bill Grundy	
	Film Stars and Village Players	Film	Documentary	Dramatist and writer L Du Garde Peach – scripted and narrated by Bill Grundy	South Yorkshire/North Derbyshire
	Wembley Special	Studio	Sport	Preview of Rugby League Cup Final	Yorkshire
	Twenty to the Dozen (4 programmes)	Studio	Chat show.	Guests include Jeff Nuttall, Ashley Jackson, Warren Mitchell.	
	York AD 2000	Studio + film inserts	Current affairs - discussion	Chaired by John Burns	
	A Future for National Parks	Studio + film inserts	Current affairs - discussion	Chaired by John Burns	

YEAR	PROGRAMME / SERIES	MEDIUM	TYPE OF PROGRAMME	PERSONALITIES	PLACES
1972	Water Water Everywhere	Studio + film inserts	Current affairs - discussion	Chaired by John Burns	
	A Collier's Tale (3 programmes)	Studio	Interview	Jim Bullock OBE, President of colliery managers union & author talks to Barry Chambers	West Yorkshire
	North Country Folk (4 programmes)	Studio	Music	Tony Capstick presents folk music from the region	
	When Yorkshiremen Made Movies (3 programmes)	Film	Documentary on early film making in Yorkshire	Presented by film archivist and collector John Huntley	Yorkshire
	A Question of Cricket (2 programmes)	Studio	Sport	Studio panel: Brian Close, Ray Illingworth, Geoff Boycott	Yorkshire
	Jimmy Savile and Friends (3 programmes)		Interview	Guests: Vic Feather, Lord Soper, Jackie Charlton.	
<b>1973</b>	<b>45 programmes + 3 programmes ex Newcastle</b>				
	Jimmy Savile and Friends (series continuing from 1972)	Studio	Interview	Jimmy Savile with Michael Parkinson	
	Community Nights (4 programmes)	Studio + film inserts	Current affairs – community politics (Leeds Free Schools, knowing your rights, community, industry)		
	North Country Naturalist (4 programmes)	Studio + film inserts	Studio guests including birds		
	Here Comes Everybody (4 programmes)	Studio	Arts magazine	Presented by poet Pete Morgan	
	Northern Exposure	Studio	Discussion with professional photographers		
	The Flying Scotsman	Film	Archive compilation		
	Northern Gardeners Question Time (5 programmes)	Studio	Gardening	John Timpson (chair), Bill Sowerbutts, Fred Loads, Alan Gemmell	
	Settle to Carlisle	Film	Railway heritage and history. Landscape	Narrated by Bob Cryer MP	Yorkshire Dales
	Come On In (7 programmes)	Studio	Music		
	Charlie Williams (2 programmes)	Studio	Interview - comedy		South Yorkshire
	Northern Enquiry (2 programmes)	Studio + film inserts	Studio discussion (motorways, Yorkshire Dales National Park)		
	They're Pulling Down Memory Lane (2 programmes)	Film	History. Nostalgia. Archive film compilations.	Written and narrated by Brian Thompson	Yorkshire; Lincolnshire
	Wonderful Amy	Film	History. Biography – Amy Johnson.	Amy Johnson. Written and narrated by Brian Thompson.	East Yorkshire.
	In Search of a City (3 programmes)	Film.	History. Architecture.	Presented by Patrick Nuttgens	Leeds
	The Object in Question (5 programmes)	Studio	Panel game with objects from the region's museums		
	Champion Jack Dupree: A Barrelhouse of Blues	Studio	Music	Champion Jack Dupree	Halifax
	Magna Carta	Studio	Music. Event (Christmas)		Yorkshire Dales

<b>1974</b>	<b>33 programmes + 9 repeats + 1 ex Norwich</b>				
	Northern Forum (3 programmes)	Studio + inserts	Current affairs – studio debate with MPs on the three-day week, the Selby coalfield and the future of the coal industry.	Presented by BBC Journalist Reg Abbiss	
	Northern Election Forum	Studio + film inserts	Discussion with regional politicians		
	Don Spencer: Nice and Easy (4 programmes)	Studio	Guests?	Don Spencer?	
	Who Wants to be a Millionaire? (3 programmes)	Film	Documentaries	Frank Arden (farmer), Len Shaw (electronics manufacturer), Jim Windsor (bookmaker)	
	Swing in the Seventies	Studio	Big Band	Syd Lawrence Orchestra	
	Coming on Strong (6 programmes)	Studio + film inserts	Arts in the region	Presented by poet Pete Morgan	
	The Other Government (4 programmes)	Studio	Studio discussion on aspects of local government (rates, housing, planning, councillors)	Chaired by Michael Cooke	
	The ROSLA Experience	Studio + film insert	Studio discussion on raising of the school leaving age to 16	Chaired by Patrick Nuttgens	
	Reunion Bradford Pals	Film	History (World War One)	Written and narrated by Brian Thompson	Bradford
	A View of Upper Calderdale	Film	History. Landscape. Heritage	Presented by Professor Bernard Jennings	Yorkshire
	A View of Upper Wharfedale	Film	History. Landscape. Heritage	Presented by Colin Speakman	Yorkshire
	A View of the Witham	Film	History. Landscape. Heritage	Presented by Neville Powley	Lincolnshire
	Amazing Blondell	Studio	Progressive folk/rock band		Lincolnshire
	Here Comes Everybody (4 programmes)	Studio	Studio performances by poets and writers	Presented by Pete Morgan	
	The 101 <sup>st</sup> Archbishop	Studio + film insert	Studio interview	Dr Donald Coggan	
	Coming Up Roses in Bingley	Film	Documentary – amateur drama production	Narrated by Brian Thompson	West Yorkshire
	Once Upon a Christmas	Studio + film insert	Christmas performances from school children		
<b>1975</b>	<b>38 programmes + 10 repeats + 1 ex Newcastle</b>				
	Let the People Talk (6 programmes)	Studio	Discussion with people “from widely different background” on specific theme	Presented by Michael Cooke	
	Hullo Wally	Studio	Music – progressive rock band		Band from Harrogate
	A Living Example	Film	Documentary on commune		South Yorkshire
	Food For Thought (6 programmes)	Studio	Growing food and cooking it	Presented by gardener Geoffrey Smith and cookery writer Evelyn Rose	
	The Politics of Reason (2 programmes)	Studio	Platform for regional MPs		
	Our Dad’s War (2 programmes)	Film	Archive. History (World War Two). Event.	Narrated and scripted by Brian Thompson	Yorkshire
	Brass Roots (4 programmes)	Studio			
	You Ought to be in Pictures (4 programmes)	Studio/film inserts	Archive amateur film sequences	Presented by film collector John Huntley	
	Summer Interview (6 programmes)	Studio		Guests : Sandy Powell, Sir Alec Clegg, the Duke of Devonshire, Joe Scarborough, Elsie Revie, Alan Ayckbourn	
	York: A journey by Patrick Nuttgens (2 programmes)	Film	Documentary – history, architecture.	Patrick Nuttgens; Directed by John Bulmer	York
	The Way it is With Me (3 programmes)	Film	Documentaries : Ernest Pickering, steelworker; Bob Allen, inshore fisherman; Peter Hepworth, farmer.		Yorkshire
	Everlasting Circle	Film	Documentary – customs marking events throughout the pagan year	“Programme editor: Brian Thompson”	

1976	<i>53 programmes + 6 repeats + 2 programmes ex Newcastle</i>				
	Savile's Yorkshire Speakeasy (4 programmes)	Studio		Jimmy Savile	Yorkshire
	The Commune – One Year later	Film	Documentary – follow-up on film about a commune		South Yorkshire
	Top Town (10 programme)	Studio	Inter-town Competition	Presented by Dave Lee Travis	York, Leeds, Sheffield, Barnsley, Wakefield, Harrogate, The Dales, Lincoln.
	Let the People Talk (2 programmes)	Studio	Discussion with people “from widely different background” on specific theme	Presented by Michael Cooke	
	The Rating Game (4 programmes)	Studio	Local government. Studio discussion on council rates.		
	Weekend Out (8 programmes)	Film compilation	Places to visit and activities	Guest presenters include Patrick Nuttgens (2 items), Geoffrey Smith, Bob Cryer MP (2 items), Phil Mays	Yorkshire, Derbyshire, Lincolnshire
	Scarborough Bank Holiday	Film	Impressionistic documentary		Scarborough
	We've Got the Music (4 programmes)	Studio	Music – guests presenters introduce their choice of bands	John Peel & Be-Bop Deluxe, David Hamilton & Smokie, Kid Jansen & Magna Carta, BBC continuity presenter Brian Baines & the Yorkshire Jazz Sextet	
	The Object in Question (6 programmes)	Studio	Panel game with objects from the region's museums	Chaired by Michael Aspel. Panel members include celebrities Phil Mays, Stuart Hall, Stanley Boardman, Wilf Lunn, Keith Fordyce, Lady Masham, Alan Bennett, Pat Nuttgens.	
	The Boy from Bowers Row	Studio + film insert	Interview	Jim Bullock OBE, President of colliery managers union & author	
	Only Make Believe	Film		Jim Moran makes believe he is an American GI	
	Atkinson Huby	Film	Documentary – Victorian negatives found on a market stall	Produced by Brian Thompson	Wakefield
	...And Peppermint	Film	Drama – Couple widely different in age and interests spend a weekend together in a holiday cottage	Written by Brian Thompson	Whitby
	Close Up North: The Day the Gala Came to Town	Film	Documentary - Cameramen's impressions of Wakefield Miners Gala		Wakefield
	Close Up North: The Man in the Iron Lung	Film	Documentary – hospital patient who had spent 28 years in an iron lung		Sheffield
	Close Up North: Unwanted Teachers	Film	Current affairs – education, unemployment		
	Close Up North: Moving On	Film	Current affairs – adult literacy		
	Close Up North: The Other Victims	Film	Current affairs – crisis in fishing industry		
	Close Up North: Punch	Film	Documentary - music		Bradford
	Close Up North: The £3000 Catch	Film	Documentary – angling competition		
	Close Up North: What the Youngsters Think	Film	Documentary – Sixth form school leavers		Sheffield
	Close Up North: The Friendly Invasion	Film	Documentary – Dutch shoppers		Hull, York

<b>1977 61 programmes + 7 repeats +1 programme ex Newcastle</b>					
	Let the People Talk (6 programmes)	Studio	Discussion with people “from widely different background” on specific theme	Presented by Michael Cooke	
	The BBC North Youth Concert (4 programmes)	OB	Music – school and youth bands and choirs	Presented by Geoffrey Wheeler	Humberside, South Yorkshire, West Yorkshire, North Yorkshire
	Get Up and Go (6 programmes)	Film compilations	Activities		
	See You When I Get Home	Film	Documentary – local regiment’s tour in Germany		Yorkshire
	Press Club (4 programmes)	Studio	Current affairs – the press on the press		
	My Lord Mayor	Film	Documentary – Lord Mayor of York		York
	Cup Tie: The Sights and Sounds of a Saturday	Film	Impressionistic documentary of events when Leeds Utd meet Manchester City in FA Cup 5th. round		Leeds
	In Conversation (6 programmes)	Studio	Interviews with guest presenters	Brian Morris with Barry Hines & Barbara Castle, Arnold Hadwin with Wilf McGuinness, Patrick Nuttgens with motorway campaigner John Tyme, Paul Allan with Roy Clarke, Jack Watmough with Bill Bowes.	
	Where were you on Coronation Day?	Film	Archive. History. Event.		
	Here Comes the Queen	Film	Event – Queen’s Silver Jubilee	The Queen	
	It’s a Knutt House (3 programmes)	Studio	Studio audience on specific themes: holidays, back-to-back houses, love and marriage.	Hosted by Bobbie Knutt with music from singer Chris Rowe and pianist Mike Gordon	
	A Bridge Too Late	Film	Current affairs – building the Humber Bridge		East Yorkshire, North Lincolnshire
	No Job for a Spanner	Film	Current affairs – unemployment in mining village		West Yorkshire
	The Camp	Film	Documentary – scout troop		West Yorkshire
	Mr Smith Steps Out (5 programmes)	Film	Walks.	Geoffrey Smith	Yorkshire. Derbyshire. Lincolnshire.
	Politics North (14 programmes)	Studio	Discussion between region’s MPs and studio audience		
	Beneath the Pennines (5 programmes)	Film	Caving	Filmed by Sid Perou. Scripts by Brian Thompson.	North Yorkshire
<b>1978 48 programmes + 10 repeats</b>					
	It’s Your Turn	Studio	Variety – club acts		Yorkshire
	Young Music Makers (4 programmes)	OB	Music (youth, quartet, folk, ensembles, jazz, school bands, brass band, Leeds College of Music)		3 concerts from Huddersfield Town Hall, 1 from the Royal Hall in Harrogate)
	Let the People Talk (6 programmes)	Studio	Discussion with people “from widely different background” on specific theme	Presented by Michael Cooke	
	Lifelines (6 programmes)	Studio	Astrology panel game	Guests include: Geoffrey Smith, Stuart Hall, Marti Caine, Michael Barratt, Arthur Scargill, Mollie Sugden, Graham Fletcher, Billie Whitelaw, Viv Nicholson, Geoff Boycott. John Braine, Steve Race	
	Direct Line (6 programmes)	Studio	Phone-in with region’s MPs		
	Close Up North: A Matter of Breeding	Film	Documentary. Event – Great Yorkshire Show.	Narrated by Ken Ford	Harrogate and Yorkshire

1978	Close Up North: Remember You're Ladies	Film	Documentary. Event – choir		Harrogate
	Close Up North: Weekend War	Film	Documentary. Yorkshire Territorial Army exercise at Catterick		Yorkshire
	Close Up North: Backstage in Clubland	Film	Documentary – contracting of artists by workingmen's clubs	Narrated by Ken Ford	Yorkshire
	Close Up North: The Disappearing Coast	Film	Documentary – coastal erosion at Holderness		East Yorkshire
	Close Up North: Trains, Trains, Trains	Film	Documentary – North York Moors Railway		North Yorkshire
	Close Up North: The Argentina Connection	Film	Documentary – football (sale of Argentinian player to Sheffield United)		Sheffield
	Close Up North: The Super Dream	Film	Current affairs – young motorcyclists fatal accident rate		
	Close Up North: Lord of the Turf	Film	Documentary – horse racing + aristocracy	The Earl of Halifax	
	Houses of the Sun	Film	Documentary – history, architecture (stained glass in York Church)	Presented by Patrick Nuttgens. Filmed and directed by John Bulmer.	York
	Lifelines (10 programmes)	Studio + inserts	Astrology panel game	Guests include: Alan Ayckbourn, Richard Todd, Dorothy Hyman, Brian Glover, pianist Michael Roll, Charlie Williams, Ray Illingworth, Colin Welland, Jilly Cooper, Frankie Vaughan, black pudding maker Albert Hirst, referee Arthur Ellis, Look North reporter Ken Cooper, Harry Mortimer, Dave Lee Travis, Countess of Harewood, Chris Bonnington, Keith Fordyce, Leslie Sands, "James Herriot", Peter Woods.	
<b>1979</b>	<b>73 programmes + 1 produced for Network + 8 repeats, 1 ex Newcastle, 1 ex Plymouth, 1 ex Birmingham, 1 ex Norwich</b>				
	Springtime with Geoffrey Smith (4 programmes)	Film	Visits to gardens.		Yorkshire (2), Lincolnshire and Derbyshire
	The Object in Question (10 programmes)	Studio	Panel game with objects from the region's museums		
	Let the People Talk (7 programmes)	Studio	Discussion with people "from widely different background" on specific theme	Presented by Michael Cooke	
	Men on Women on Men (2 programmes)	Studio	Musical revue – shortened version of theatre production	Written by Alan Ayckbourn with music by Paul Todd. Ayckbourn also credited with TV direction.	
	The Big Wide World	Film	Documentary – school leavers' expectations		Hull
	It Seems Like Yesterday (6 programmes)	Studio + inserts	Interviews.	John Braine, Stan Boardman, Frankie Vaughan, Christopher Simon Sykes, Jilly Cooper, Roy Hattersley	
	Direct Line (11 programmes)	Studio	Phone in to region's MPs in aftermath of general election.		
	Imago Mundi	Studio	Music and dance from the communities of West Yorkshire		West Yorkshire
	What Am I Bid? (5 programmes)	Studio	Antiques quiz show		
	In Conversation (6 programmes)	Studio	Interviews	Duncan McKenzie, Vivian Stuart, Peter Alliss, Dr Patrick Nuttgens, Lord James of Rusholme, Peter Glossop	
	Close Up North: Film Censorship	Film	Current affairs – Harrogate Council ban <i>Life of Brian</i>		Harrogate
	Close Up North: South Yorkshire Transport	Studio + film insert	Current affairs – studio discussion		Sheffield



1979	Close Up North: Humber Bridge	OB	Current affairs – cost of bridge. Discussion including local MPs		Humberside (East Yorkshire, South Lincolnshire)
	Close Up North: Afforestation	Film	Current affairs – dispute regarding tree planting		Yorkshire Dales
	Close Up North: Theatre Finance	Studio + film insert	Current affairs – Arts Council funding		Leeds
	Close Up North: Wool Textile Industry	Studio + film inserts	Current affairs – studio discussion		West Yorkshire
	Close Up North: Victims' Rights	Film/studio	Current affairs		
	Close Up North: Lead Pollution	Film/studio	Current affairs – from M62 and factory		West Yorkshire
	Close Up North: Education Cuts	Studio + film inserts	Current affairs – discussion		
	Close Up North: Teenage Drinkers	Film	Current affairs		
	Close Up North: Night Life	Film/studio	Current affairs – club scene	Contributors include Barney Colehan and Bernard Manning	
	Close Up North: Yeadon Airport Extension	Film/studio	Current affairs – controversy over extension of Leeds/Bradford airport		
	Diary of Britain: Sound an Alarm	Film	Documentary following male voice choir (part of regional series for NETWORK)		South Yorkshire
	Hometown (10 programmes)	OB	History. Heritage. Places to go.	Presented by Look North reporter Ken Cooper	Places: Yorkshire – Beverley, Holmfirth, Filey, Skipton, Bingley, Knaresborough, Selby, Bawtry. Derbyshire - Chesterfield.
<b>1980</b>	<b>63 programmes + 5 repeats</b>				
	The Comics (3 programme)	Film	Archive. History. Comedy (each programme profiles a famous Northern comic with extracts from their films)	Arthur Lucan (Old Mother Riley), Sandy Powell, Sydney Howard.	
	Lifelines (10 programmes)	Studio + inserts	Astrology panel game	Guests include: Jack Charlton, Ian Carmichael, Alan Plater, Lennie Bennet, Jean Rook, Peter Skellern, Duke of Devonshire, Bobby Knutt, Geoff Capes, David Seymour, Joe Jordan, John Noakes, Francis Matthews, Austin Mitchell, Bernie Clifton, Mike Harding.	
	The Lancaster Legend (2 programmes)	Film	History (World War 2), archive, re-enactment	Narrated by Richard Todd. Prog 2 tells the story of Sqd Ldr Jack Currie	
	Yorkshire Buccaneer	Film	History (aviation pioneer Robert Blackburn). Archive		
	Destroy the Enemy	Film	History (Robert Blackburn/ Buccaneer aircraft). Archive		
	A Horse of Us Own	Film	Documentary (syndicate buy racehorse)		
	Jimmy Savile's Yorkshire Speakeasy (4 programmes)	Studio	Savile talks to studio guests: Old people, Paraplegics, Young people, "10 Famous Faces"	Famous faces: Dave Lee Travis, John Noakes, Linda Lewis, Cyril Smith, Geoffrey Smith, Sheila Mercier, Khalid Aziz, Michael Cooke, Freddie Trueman.	
	Close Up North (3 programmes)	OB	Current affairs (strikes, rates, unemployment). Discussion.		Sheffield + Hull
	Let the People Talk (4 programmes)	Studio	Discussion on single theme (Nuclear war, Thatcher's first year as PM, the British Empire, sport and politics.)		
	The City That Couldn't Lose	Film	Sport (rugby league challenge cup)	Contributors include Eddie Waring and Frank Bough	Hull

1980	Rock Athlete (3 programmes)	Film	Climbing	Filmed by Sid Perou, script by Brian Thompson.	
	The Enemy Camp (3 programmes)	Studio	Discussion between invited politician and studio audience		
	From the Top (4 programmes)	Studio	Music (Brass, jazz, male voice choir, folk)	Presented by BBC North continuity announcer Brian Baines	
	Direct Line (8 programmes)	Studio	Phone-in on different themes		
	One Man's River	Film	Natural history. Angling. Landscape.	Brian Morland, river warden	North Yorkshire
	Girl in a Glider	Film	Gliding	Narrated by Sqd Ldr Jack Currie	
	The Jews of Leeds (2 programmes)	Film	History. Community.		Leeds
	Our Northern Economy (6 programmes)	Studio/Film	Economy. Industry (traditional industries, textiles, steel, engineering, electronics, future)		
	Children in Need	Studio + inserts	First BBC TV telethon		
	Close Up North (4 programmes)	OB	Current affairs (council housing, football finance, private medicine, Harrogate Conference Centre)		
<b>1981</b>	<b>47 programmes + 17 repeats + 3 ex Birmingham + 1 ex Newcastle + 1 programme made for network</b>				
	Hometown (8 programmes)	OB	History. Heritage. Places to go.	Presented by Look North reporter Ken Cooper	Places visited – Yorkshire: Hebden Bridge, Bridlington, Doncaster, Pately Bridge, Tadcaster. Lincolnshire: Boston, Louth. Derbyshire: Hathersage.
	Politics North (7 programmes)	Studio	Discussion between regional MPs		
	Troll Wall (2 programmes)	Film	Climbing	Sid Perou	Norway
	Arrival of the Water Carrier in Mesopotamia	Film	Archive. History (of the tank)		Lincolnshire
	The £35 Million Pay Off	Film	Unemployment, Industry (steel)		Scunthorpe
	Riding the Summer Sun	Film	Gliding. Event.		
	Success Story (6 programmes)	Studio + inserts	Interviews	Larry Lamb, Eddie Waring, Alan Bennett, Gilbert Grey QC, Sid Perou	
	Miners on the Move	Film	Industry (new Selby coalfield)		North/West Yorkshire
	Class (4 programmes)	Studio	School dance		Mostly featured schools in South and West Yorkshire
	The Queen Opens the Humber Bridge	OB + film inserts	Event.		Humberside (East Yorkshire, North Lincolnshire)
	Direct Line (7 programmes)	Studio	Phone-in on range of subjects including gardening		
	From Hull, Hell and Halifax	Film	History (World War 2)	Narrated by Sqd Ldr Jack Currie	North Yorkshire
	On Location (4 programmes)	OB	Visits to institutions (Sheffield Children's Hospital, West Yorkshire Police Academy, Lincolnshire Life Museum, Lincoln Cathedral)		Yorkshire, Lincolnshire
	Tales of Cities: The Craftsman's Tale	Film	Part of regional series for NETWORK	Steel worker Ernest Pickering	Sheffield
	Children in Need	Film	Charity appeal (miners at Kellingley Colliery respond)		North Yorkshire

1981	Sign of the Times (3 programmes)	Film	Current affairs: employment, farming, emigration		
<b>1982</b>	<b>62 programmes + 4 repeats + 3 ex Norwich +2 ex Newcastle + 1 ex Midlands</b>				
	Looking Back – A personal View	Film	Archive compilation of Look North clips from early 1970s	Brian Thompson	
	Chatsworth – House and Home	Film	‘filmed impression’ of Chatsworth House	Duke and Duchess of Devonshire; Directed by John Bulmer	Derbyshire
	Lifelines (12 programmes)	Studio + inserts	Astrology panel game	Guests include: Duchess of Devonshire, Roy Kinnear, Geoff Love, Kieran Prendeville, Peter Alliss, Cyril Smith, Fred Trueman, Bob Langley, Bill Sowerbutts, David Hamilton, Brian Close, Derek Nimmo, Keigh Chegwin, Harry Worth, Mike Read, Paul Shane, Judith Chalmers, Frazer Hines, George Layton, Tom O’Conner, Bill Tidy, Norman Collier	
	Politics North (5 programmes)	Studio	Discussion between regional MPs		
	Backstage (3 programmes)	OB	Visits to regional theatres		Scarborough, York, Sheffield
	Regimental Showcase (4 programmes)	Studio	Panel look at objects from regimental museums	Presented by Peter West	Yorkshire, Lincolnshire
	One Plus One (6 programmes)	Studio + inserts	Interviews	Richard Hoggart, Brian Rix, Canon Foley, Stanley Ellis, Kevin Keegan, Clare Venables	
	The Unquiet Coast	Film	History of the Lincolnshire coast		Lincolnshire
	Between in Heather and the Sea	Film	Horseback journey around Robin Hood’s Bay	Poet Pete Morgan	North Yorkshire
	A Future for Yorkshire’s Past	Film	Archaeology		West Yorkshire
	Gardeners Direct Line (7 programmes)	Studio	Phone-in	Geoffrey Smith + other experts familiar to the audience of Gardeners Question Time	
	Leeds on the ‘B’ Side	Film	Music – local bands in Leeds pubs	Presented by contract assistant film editor Ernie Wood	Leeds
	Impressions	Film	Three personal films by regular freelance cameramen	Cameramen: Graham Smith, Keith Massey, Dave Brierley	
	On Location: The Vikings in England	OB	Event, history, museum visit (Vikings in England exhibition)		York
	Blunkett’s Republic	Film	Profile. Politics. Local government.	David Blunkett (Leader of the Council)	Sheffield
	Goodbye Chapelton	Film	West Indian community		Leeds
	Balloon over Yorkshire (2 programmes)	Film	Hot-air ballooning	Sid Perou	Yorkshire Dales, North York Moors
	Man of Trust: Joseph Rowntree 1836-1925	Film	History. Biography.	Joseph Rowntree	York
	Family Life on the Dole	Film	Economy		
	Songs from a Garden Wall	Film	Music		Lincolnshire
	The Architect of Civic Pride: The Story of Cuthbert Broderick	Film	Architecture. History. Biography.	Cuthbert Broderick. Presented by Dr Patrick Nuttgens	Leeds
	The Giro Generation	Film	Economy – unemployment amongst young people		
	Children in Need	Studio + inserts	Telethon		
	They’re Knocking Down Alcatraz	Film	Current affairs – housing.		Leeds
	Headingley Test	Film	Cricket. Gardening. (A year in the life of the Headingley groundsman)	Keith Boyce (groundsman). Narrated by Ken Ford	Leeds

<b>1983</b>	<b>61 programmes + 4 repeats + 2 ex Birmingham</b>				
	On Location (2 series, 5 programmes in each)	OB	Visits to museums, mine rescue station + RAF Scampton		Hull, Sheffield, Bradford, Heptonstall, Sharlestone, Spalding
	My Show (7 programmes)	Studio + film	Personalities introduce their own show	Guest presenters: Stan Boardman, Enid Hattersley, Rita May, George Kendrick, Chas White + a Sheffield art student	Yorkshire
	Magic Lantern Show (4 programmes)	Studio	Magic Lantern Slides. Photography. History	Presented by collector John Jones	
	Performing Peace	OB	Opera North on the road		Wakefield
	Pints and Puccini	OB	Opera North on the road		Leeds
	Jeans and Giovanni	OB	Opera North on the road		Leeds
	Cinderella Workshop	OB	Opera North on the road		Bradford
	Bubbling Under (4 programmes)	OB	University/college music scene	Compared by Dave Silver	Sheffield, Leeds, Hull, Bradford
	Gardeners' Direct Line (12 programmes)	Studio	Phone-in	Geoffrey Smith + other experts familiar to the audience of Gardeners Question Time	
	Voyage Between Two Seas (5 programmes)	Film	Boat journey from Liverpool to Spurn Point		Yorkshire
	Election Direct Line (3 programmes)	Studio	Phone-in. Politics		
	One Plus One	Studio + inserts	Interviews	Michael Palin, Don Mosey, Dr Stuart Blanch, Fannie Waterman, Professor Laurie Taylor, Dr Horace Dobbs	
	A Week with the Whip	Film	Documentary. Local government.		Calderdale
	Fight for the Settle-Carlisle	Film	Current affairs		Yorkshire Dales
	Children in Need	Studio + inserts			
	Art in the Market Place	Film	Documentary. Art		
	Goodnight Campers	Film	Event (closure of Butlins holiday camp in Filey). History. Reminiscence		Filey
	Goodbye to the Good Old Days	Film	Event (end of the long-running TV series). BBC history.		Leeds
<b>1984</b>	<b>68 programmes + 3 repeats</b>				
	Northern Lights (8 programmes)	Studio + inserts	Arts magazine		
	Pennine Challenge (4 programmes)	Film	Outdoor activity, landscape	Sid Perou	Pennines
	The Lost River of Gaping Gill (2 programmes)	Film	Caving	Sid Perou	Yorkshire Dales
	Making Moves (3 programmes)	Studio	Dance		
	Gardeners' Direct Line (11 programmes)	Studio	Phone-in		
	Deadly Virtues	OB	Musical review by Alan Ayckborn & Paul Todd	Alan Ayckborn	Scarborough
	Jazz at the Leadmill (4 programmes)				
	Steel City Blues	Film	Sport		Sheffield
	Big Day at Beck Hole	Film	Caving	Sid Perou	Yorkshire Dales
	A Chance to Meet (6 programmes)	Studio + inserts	Interviews	Marti Caine, Ian Carmichael, Barry Cryer, Diz Disley, Jimmy Jewel, John Duttine	
	Ransome (2 programmes)	Film	Co-production with BBC Manchester - biography	Arthur Ransome	Leeds
	The Ways Ahead (4 programmes)	OB/Film	Current affairs. Job creation schemes.		
	The Flight from Utopia (3 programmes)	Film	History. Architecture	Presented by Professor Patrick Nuttgens	

1984	An Englishman's Home (4 programmes)	OB	History. Architecture (stately homes)		Yorkshire (2), Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire
	Chocks Away	Film	Documentary: history, planes – commemoration of first solo flight to Australia – first shown on BBC-1 in 1978		
	Very Exceptional Soldiers	Film	History (World War One), reminiscences. Event		Yorkshire
	Forgotten Valley	Film	Current affairs. Industry – former mining area		South Yorkshire
	Children in Need	Studio + inserts	Telethon		
	Family Likeness		Documentary – TV crews from Leeds and Bavaria exchange places & profile different families		Leeds
	Heroin in Yorkshire (2 programmes)	Film	Documentary. Current affairs.		Yorkshire
	The Fire and the Faith	Film	Documentary. Aftermath of York Minster Fire		York Minster

<b>1985</b>	<b>67 programmes + 2 programmes from other regions + 5 repeats</b>				
	Northern Lights (12 programmes)	Studio + inserts	Arts magazine		
	Hunted Hawk	Film	Wildlife documentary		Peak District
	Goin' Places (4 programmes)	OB	Activities		Yorkshire (2), Lincs. and Derbys..
	Magic Lantern Show (4 programmes)	Studio	History (magic lantern slides), nostalgia.		
	Candidate from Mirpur	Film	Documentary		
	Pressure Point (4 programmes)	OB	Local government		Bradford, Sheffield, Hull, Leeds
	Gardeners' Direct Line (12 programmes)	Studio	Phone-in		
	In Conversation (5 programmes)	Studio	Interviews	Geoffrey Smith, Elizabeth North, Sir Edward Parkes, Gerald Kaufman, Peter Tinniswood	
	Spelliogenesis	Film	Outdoor activity	Film by Sid Perou	
	The Grain Run (5 programmes)	Film	Journey	Presented by poet Pete Morgan	Region's rivers from south to north
	The Cost of Caring (2 programmes)	Film	Documentary, health.		
	Living by Design	Film	Documentary		
	Stuntman – Roy Alon	Film	Documentary		
	Big Hearted Bransholme	Film	Documentary, current affairs		Hull
	Tourism in York	Film	Documentary, current affairs		York
	Troubled Waters	Film	Documentary, current affairs		
	Children in Need	Studio + inserts	Telethon		Region
	Distracted Tymes	Film	History re-enactment – English Civil War		Lincoln
	Women After the Strike	Film	Documentary, current affairs		Yorkshire
	Watchtower	Film	History: World War Two	Sqd Ldr Jack Currie	
<b>1986</b>	<b>44 programmes + 10 repeats</b>				
	Northern Lights (8 programmes)	Studio + inserts	Arts magazine		
	Goin' Places (6 programmes)	OB	Activities		
	Gardeners Direct Line (4 programmes)	Studio	Phone-in		
	An Englishman's Home (4 programmes)	OB	History/architecture (stately homes)		Yorkshire (3), Lincolnshire (1)
	Lost River of Gaping Ghyll (2 programmes)	Film	Caving	Films by Sid Perou	Yorkshire Dales
	Gardeners' Direct Line – On the Road (6 programmes)	OB	Gardening panel		
	Television Comes to Bradford	OB + inserts	Museum visit		Bradford
	Sheffield Gang Wars	Film	History		Sheffield
	Children in Need	Studio + inserts	Telethon		
	Tinniswood's North Country	Film	Celebrating region, history, humour	Peter Tinniswood and his fictional creations	Yorkshire
	Why Not Try? (4 programmes)	OB	Activities		
<b>1987</b>	<b>For regional transmission: 37 programmes + 4 repeats + 5 ex BBC North West region (Champion Brass). For network transmission: 5x40 minute films + 9 studio programmes (Gardeners' Direct Line)</b>				
	Search Dogs of the Summit	Film	NETWORK	Sid Perou	
	Rally in the Sky (2 Programmes)	Film	Microlighting	Sid Perou	
	A Place in the Sun	Film	NETWORK Second homes abroad		
	Beyond the Great Divide (2 programmes)	Film	Current affairs – North South divide		
	Northern Lights (9 programmes)	Studio + inserts	Arts magazine		
	An Ordinary Joe	Film	NETWORK – profile of snooker champion	Joe Johnson	Bradford
	Ronnie Scott at the Coconut Grove	OB	Music		

1987	Rugby League: Up 'n' Under	Studio + inserts	Sport – Cup Final preview		Yorkshire
	Demolition Man	Film	NETWORK		
	Gardeners' Direct Line (6 programmes)	Studio	Phone-in		
	Election Direct Line (3 programmes)	Studio	General Election Phone-in		
	A Man of Substance	Film	NETWORK		
	Women in Enterprise	Film	For network but not completed		
	Gardeners Direct Line (8 programmes)	Studio	NETWORK		
	Born Again Yorkshire	Film	Cricket		Yorkshire
	Talking from Experience (4 programmes)	Studio			
	The Look North Report	Studio/film	Current affairs		
	Children in Need	Studio + inserts	Telethon		
	Paper Kisses (2 programmes)	Film	Drama. History	Written by Brian Thompson	
	Gardeners' Direct Line: Christmas Special	Studio	NETWORK		
	Melba	Film	History. Music	Dame Nellie Melba visiting Yorkshire	
<b>1988</b>	<b><i>For regional transmission: 26 programmes + 13 repeats + 6 ex BBC North East region (North Sea). For network transmission: 5x40 minute films + 18 studio programmes</i></b>				
	The Alternative Holiday Show (6 programmes)	Studio + inserts	Activities		
	North of Westminster (6 programmes)	Studio	Politics – platform for region's MPs		
	Up North: Gangmasters	Film	NETWORK Documentary, current affairs		
	Up North: Dianne's Children	Film	NETWORK, Documentary, current affairs		
	Up North: Visions of Big Business	Film	NETWORK Documentary, current affairs		
	Gardeners' Direct Line (2 series, 7 programmes in each)	Studio	NETWORK		
	A Dirty Weekend	Film			
	Killingbeck (3 programmes)		Documentaries about specialist heart unit		
	East Coast Ripple		Current affairs incl history/archive East Coast Main Line		
	20 Years (10 programmes)	Film	Repeats to mark 20th. anniversary of establishment of BBC North TV region		
	On a Personal Note (3 programmes)	OB/Studio	Music	Andy Kershaw, Tommy Vance, John Peel, John Walters	
	One Day at a Time	Film	NETWORK Documentary – people affected by the Bradford City FC fire, 1985		
	Let the People Talk (4 programmes)	Studio	NETWORK Politics/current affairs		
	Glory Renewed	Film/PSC	NETWORK Restoration of York Minster after 1984 fire		York Minster
	Children in Need	Studio + inserts	Telethon		
	Lady Be Good (2 programmes)	Film	Biography. Archive. Single programme produced simultaneously for network transmission	Ivy Benson	
	Mallard on the Settle and Carlisle	Film/PSC	Event + archive (locomotive's speed record)		Yorkshire Dales
	The Biggest Meat and Potato Pie in the World	Film/PSC	Event. Tradition.		Denby Dale (West Yorkshire)
<b>1989</b>	<b><i>For regional transmission: 34 programmes + 4 repeats + 6 ex BBC Newcastle (Townscape), 1 ex Birmingham, 1 ex Norwich. For network transmission: 10x40 minute films + 14 studio programmes (Gardeners' Direct Line)</i></b>				
	Live at the Astoria (3 programmes)	OB	Music		Leeds
	The Augsburg Raid	Film	History: World War 2	Sqd Ldr Jack Currie	Lincolnshire + Germany

1989	North of Westminster (7 programmes)	Studio	Politics – platform for region’s MPs		
	After Hillsborough	Film	BBC North West and BBC North East co-production: aftermath of Hillsborough Disaster		
	Gardeners Direct Line (2 series, 7 programmes in each)	Studio	NETWORK		
	Secret Rivers (4 programmes)	Film	Caving	Sid Perou	
	Garden Call (5 programmes)	Studio/OB			
	Home Front (6 programmes)	Film	NETWORK Social Housing (History, archive, current affairs, architecture)	Presented by Professor Patrick Nuttgens	
	Tinniswood’s North Country (4 programmes)	Film	NETWORK Looking back, profile, archive, history.	Peter Tinniswood	Scarborough, Sheffield, Liverpool, Manchester
	Class of ‘89 (4 programmes)	Studio	Music and dance		
	Fast Tycoon	Film	Documentary - profile	Millionaire	South Yorkshire
	Games Climbers Play	Film	Documentary - climbing		
	The Hostel (2 programmes)	Film	Documentary – History, reminiscence, archive (The Kindertransport bringing Jewish children to hostel)		Bradford
	Children in Need	Studio + inserts	Telethon.		
	Peace or Quiet	Film/PSC	Documentary – RAF Leeming		North Yorkshire
	Fisherman’s Diary (4 programmes)	Film/PSC	Profile, activity, landscape	Fisherman Derek Law	
<b>1990</b>	<b><i>For regional transmission: 37 programmes + 9 programmes ex Newcastle for regional transmission across the Leeds/ Newcastle TV region; 13 phone-in programmes (Gardeners’ Direct Line) and one film made for Network</i></b>				
	North of Westminster (26 programmes)	Studio + inserts	Politics – platform for region’s MPs		
	Gardeners’ Direct Line (13 programmes)	Studio	NETWORK		
	Rugby League Review	Studio + inserts	Sport		
	Battle for Bradford	PSC	Current affairs – local government		Bradford
	Leeds United Special	Studio + inserts	Sport		Leeds
	Cathedral in Conflict	PSC	Current affairs – Lincoln Cathedral		Lincoln
	Keeping Tracks	PSC	Current affairs – Challenger tank/Royal Ordnance Factory		Leeds
	Living by the Book	Film	NETWORK Documentary		
	Terribly British	Film	NETWORK. Documentary, not-transmitted		
	Close Up North: Leeds United: On the Brink	PSC	Sport. Current affairs.		Leeds
	Close Up North: Scargill: King of Coal	PSC	Current affairs. Industry. Politics		Yorkshire
	Close Up North: The Meadowhall Experience	PSC	Event. Current affairs. Shopping.		Sheffield
	Close Up North: This Green and Pressurised Land	PSC	Current affairs		
	Close Up North: Cresswell: Awaiting the Crunch	PSC	Current affairs. Industry		Nottinghamshire
	Close Up North: A Church for the Nineties	PSC	Current affairs. Religion.		
	Close Up North: Humberside: The Great Divide	PSC	Current affairs. Local government.		East Yorkshire. North Lincolnshire.
	Close Up North: RAF Leeming: The Front Line	PSC	Current affairs – Gulf War		North Yorkshire
	Children in Need	Studio + inserts	Telethon		



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## **Online sites**

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BBC: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/>

BBC Motion Gallery: <http://www.bbcmotiongallery.com/> (transferred to Getty Images on 1 January 2014)

British Film Institute Film & TV Database: <http://ftvdb.bfi.org.uk/searches.php>

Dictionary of National Biography: <http://www.oxforddnb.com/>

Hansard 1803-2005: <http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/>

Memories of YTV: <http://memoriesofytv.weebly.com/index.html>

National Archives: <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/>

Office for National Statistics: <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/index.html>

Royal Television Society: <http://www.rts.org.uk/>

A vision of Britain through time: <http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/>

Yorkshire Film Archive: <http://www.yorkshirefilmarchive.com/>